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COMPARATIVE LITERATURE IN JAPAN

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I

IN Japan we have a nation-wide organisation of comparatists. It is called NIHON HIKAKU BUNGAU KAI (the Comparative Literature Society of Japan), with a membership of about four hundred. It has four local branches—at Tokyo, Kansai, Tohoku and Kyushu. It has had a prosperous history since its foundation fifteen years ago.

The membership has been increasing steadily from the original one hundred and fifty. The membership may seem rather large compared with those of other countries. Some explanation will be necessary for this number. All the members cannot be called comparatists in the strict sense of the word. They belong, generally, to some other academic societies, such as those of English, French, German or Japanese literatures, according to their own special fields. It would be safe to say that they are interested in comparative literature, and understand the necessity of comparative study in their own field, and at the same time, are ambitious to apply their special knowledge to the study of Japanese literature.

It is only in these last ten years that a few universities have established graduate courses in comparative literature, or lectures for graduate and undergraduate students. The total number of candidates for Ph.D. may be less than ten at present. We have not yet many specialists in comparative literature in Japan.

The idea of comparative literature was introduced into Japan nearly seventy years ago, through the books of H. Posnett and F. Lorient. Lorient's book was translated into Japanese in 1910 and became the first book bearing the name of comparative literature. When we check the writings of NATSUME Soseki or TSUBOUCHI Shoyo, we find the phrase 'hikaku bungaku' (Comparative Literature). In those days 'hikaku bungaku' meant a historical survey of culture in western Europe, tracing its origin up to Egyptian civilization. Japanese scholars learned from these books to study one nation's culture and its historical development in relation to the neighbouring

And so they understood the necessity of considering Japanese literature in relation to foreign literatures. As they had not begun an academic study of their own contemporary literary works as yet, they learned to study Japanese classics in relation to Chinese classics. This was a primitive stage of comparative study in Japan, as they had not a systematic method or any academic principles, and they did not distinguish between comparison and parallelism.

However, this idea of comparative literature was not new to Japanese scholars. Traditionally, the study of Japanese literature was and has always been carried on on the basis of its relation to literatures in other Asian countries, among them China being most important. At the same time, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and other religious beliefs, customs and manners, and social systems—these foreign elements have been the chief concern of scholars when they studied Japanese classics. Thus, they have been obliged to make comparative studies, though never systematic ones. It has been an academic demand, not a practical necessity, that has obliged them to take what is called "the comparative method." Japanese scholars were using the comparative method in practice, though they did not know anything of the modern discipline of comparative literature. We see here a favourable ground prepared for comparative literature.

When Japan opened its door to foreign countries about 100 years ago, modern Japanese literature began to develop under the direct influence of Western literature, instead of Asian literatures as in the past. Consequently, there occurred a radical change in the history of Japanese literature, and modern Japanese literature may be called different in its character from classical literature. That is, the idea of the human being was revolutionised from that of the Confucian concept in feudal times. Herein lies the serious problem in studying modern Japanese literature under Western influences.

When scholars tried to study modern Japanese literature they found their knowledge of Chinese literature or Confucianism quite useless, and their little knowledge of Western literature would do nothing for them. Thus they found out that a knowledge of Western languages and literatures was necessary for their study.

As mentioned above, there was already the tradition of considering foreign influences in the study of Japanese literature, so in the study of modern Japanese literature the consideration of Western in-

fluences was accepted as a matter of course. The point was that a different kind of knowledge was required for the study.

The works of the French comparatists came to be introduced in the 1930's, and Van Tieghem's "*Littérature Comparée*" was translated into Japanese in 1943, and Professor Nogami wrote an article on Comparative Literature chiefly relying on Van Tieghem's book. Goethe's idea of "*Weltliteratur*" and Moulton's concept of "world literature" were also introduced in the 1930's. In the first half of the decade comparative literature became popular in Japan. However, the undertones of the coming world war did not allow this tendency to develop further, and the outbreak of the war put an end to such literary study. Instead, nationalistic attitudes dominated the scene.

The end of the war brought internationalism into every sphere of Japanese life, and comparative literature was not an exception. It was accepted as a new approach to the study of modern Japanese literature.

It should be noticed here that the comparative method was accepted as a necessity, and that, the study of comparative literature did not originate on its own merit, but as a necessary approach to the study of modern Japanese literature. This fact will explain why comparative literature has many followers and sympathizers.

It is hardly necessary to add that only a few students of Japanese literature would ever admit following the new attitude of study. They wish to restrict their study to traditional fields, though sometimes they do refer to Western influences. They do not wish to follow a systematic way of comparative study. They do not understand the significance of the scientific method.

Besides, there is a good reason for such antipathy to comparative literature among scholars of Japanese literature. Some students of comparative literature are inclined to emphasize Western influences so much that they end in saying that modern Japanese literature is nothing but a sheer imitation of Western literature. Such opinions have caused serious disputes among scholars and have given a bad reputation to comparative literature in Japan.

However, to those who looked at the characteristics of modern Japanese literature, the new method of comparative literature seemed a great help in their study, enabling them to analyze a literary work from quite a new point of view.

Such being the circumstances, when the establishment of the

Society was proposed by a group of scholars, headed by Mr. Kenzo TAKAJIMA, scholars both in Japanese literature and foreign literatures co-operated in founding the Society. From the beginning of its fifteen-year history, the Society succeeded in gaining those scholars and students as members who were well qualified for comparative study with sufficient knowledge of Western literatures and languages. They have been working together with specialists in Japanese literature. At present, scholars of Western literature play the leading role in its activities. Recently, young students of Japanese literature are increasingly studying Western languages, and thus they are better qualifying themselves for comparative study. This is a very promising tendency for the Society. On the other hand, it is recruiting young ambitious students of Western literature who are interested in tracing Western influences in modern Japanese literature.

We have only a few scholars who call themselves comparatists. It may seem strange that, when comparative literature is so popular, there are only a few people who profess to be comparatists. But this does not matter to the Society. When they work as members of the Society they are comparatists, and at the same time, they are working as specialists of English literature, French literature, etc. The two sides of their work do not contradict each other; they can be unified in their work as comparatists. One work will help the other in the long run.

At present the Society has two publications, one a yearly journal "Hikaku Bungaku" (Comparative Literature) and the other a quarterly bulletin. Last autumn it published vol. V of the "Hikaku Bungaku", and the last issue of the Bulletin is No. 32, dated January, 1963. Articles, bibliographies, information and documents from home and abroad appear in these publications. They are the links which connect the members together.

The Society holds a national convention once a year. At the last convention, more than twenty papers were presented, and an audience of two hundred was present. The local branches of the Society hold meetings for the presentation of papers and discussions. In Tokyo a meeting is held regularly once a month, where the members of the Society can find opportunities to present the results of their research.

At the beginning of its activities, the Society tried to clarify the idea of comparative literature and thus to establish its academic

foundation. As mentioned above, comparative literature was not a new idea to Japanese scholars, and, in part, it was accepted without a clear understanding of its academic nature. Thus, the establishment of the academic basis was an immediate task of the Society. If each member should work upon his own understanding, a very difficult situation would arise, which would be harmful to the development of comparative literature in Japan.

Taking this into consideration, the leaders of the Society, first encouraged the members to study the characteristics of comparative literature in France. Several of the members had studied at the Sorbonne and attended classes of J. M. Carée, and they explained to the members the French comparative methods. Members were given a clear idea of comparative literature through their lectures, and the French comparatists became reliable guides for their research. Next we approached comparatists in the United States, and found very instructive information in their works.

Some of the members were more interested in the French method, and others more in American scholars. However, we did not wish to become blind followers of either one of the two. We wished to proceed further. We thought that the only way to make a true estimate of foreign influence, even that on a single word or phrase, was to consider its significance only in context. If a borrowed element, say, words, plots, ideas etc. is taken out of context, and considered separately from the literary work itself, then the true significance of influence cannot be understood. We should first collect fundamental materials, sometimes analyzing a given literary work, or surveying the social and literary circumstances, and then we should estimate foreign influences in a literary work itself. Many of the members wished to proceed on this level.

We did not mind that there were different opinions concerning the study of comparative literature among the members. Comparative literature cannot be defined strictly at present, as it is passing through various stages of development in many countries where, naturally, the objectives of study may be different. We have common ideas about its major field, its method, yet, in detail, there are different opinions. The important thing is that in Japan comparative literature is concerned with the literary relation of Japanese literature to foreign literatures, and its aim is to clarify the significance of foreign influences. Any method, any attitude that may be useful

to the aim, should not be neglected. Every researcher should develop his own method of study to suit his own particular objectives. No one method can be applied to all fields of study, it should be modified according to the nature of the purpose. Any method, if strictly formulated, will not work effectively—this is a common understanding among the members of the Society.

We have rather a loose idea of comparative literature. We are thinking more of its practical use than of a generalized or formulated idea or principle. We do not wish to follow blindly a certain method developed by foreign scholars. It is through actual research that a method, and then ideas, would evolve.

Such a practical attitude is more desirable when we think of the comparative study of classical Japanese literature. We have a tradition in this field and scholars are investigating foreign influences. The problems they are confronting in their research are sometimes different from those in modern Japanese literature. For example, positive proof of foreign influences is sometimes difficult to find, though foreign influences may be clearly recognized. Materials have been lost in the long lapse of time. Even though we often have clear indications of foreign influences, we may have no data to prove the influences. If we exclude such cases from our study, we should have to limit our activity to a very narrow field. Here we ought to consider the fact that sometimes we cannot obtain the materials to prove foreign influences even in our study of modern Japanese literature. If comparative literature is to investigate foreign influences in general upon Japanese literature, then classical Japanese literature should be one of our objects of study. The point is: we must discover methods applicable to such objects. Similar cases will be found also in the comparative study of modern Japanese literature. With the development of mass communication, the direct influence of foreign literary works is becoming more and more difficult to trace.

The very remarkable break in 1868 sometimes obliges us to divide our study of Japanese literature into two parts. Yet these two parts should not be regarded as independent, separate trends, for no doubt both these are Japanese literature. The difference is chiefly concerning foreign influences upon them. If we define comparative literature as a discipline for the study of foreign influences, then Japanese literature of any period, which has been exposed to any foreign influence, should be our object of study.

The above is the historical background of comparative literature in Japan.

II

Next I will mention some of our chief problems.

The Japanese language is quite different from Western languages in vocabulary, sentence construction and, too, Japanese culture has a characteristic tradition of several thousand years. The introduction of Western literary works in most cases has been done through translation. Creative writers have not been exceptions. There were a few writers who could read the original works, but these languages were generally limited to English, German and French. Literary works in Russian or Italian were read in English translation or in a Japanese translation of an English translation.

Generally, Japanese translations have been the chief medium in the introduction of Western literature. Thus translations are the most popular objects of comparative study. First, translators, original works, background and reputation of translations, and then influences through translations—these have been the concern of students.

Critical investigation of translations often presents important problems. For instance, abridgement and adaptation of original works, as often seen in 1870's and 1880's, leads us to investigate social and cultural conditions which modify understanding of Western literary works by Japanese readers. Western ideas of individuality, humanism, human relations, Christianity, etc. were so far from their understanding that the Japanese common people could not comprehend what was expressed in the original works. Translations suffered a certain kind of modification by translators, which means an adaptation of the original works to the understanding of the common reader.

Then we have the problem of style. The Japanese language is peculiar in its use of verbs, pronouns, and in its syntax. The possibility of translation of foreign literary works into Japanese gives us a basic problem of literary study, namely, the appreciation of literary works by foreigners.

On the other hand, the study of the translation of Japanese literature into Western languages, is now becoming popular among comparatists. Till now attention has been paid to the Japanese translations from Western languages, as the source of influences. Since the

end of World War II, contemporary writers have come to be translated, and these translations sometimes have gained a good reputation abroad. Before this, Japanese classics were the chief interest of translators, and the work was done generally by foreigners. The book, "Japanese Literature in European Language—A Bibliography", published in 1961 by the Japan PEN Club, gives a nearly complete list of translations, and at the same time, show the tendency during the past ninety years. Translators are both Japanese and Westerners, and here again we find the problem which is found in the translation of Western literature into Japanese—the limitations of translating into foreign languages. Here the problem can be tackled from the opposite side.

In short, a great number of translations from Western literatures, and a great difference in languages and traditions, are providing rich material for comparative literature in Japan.

With regard to translations, we have now the following research works. We have the statistics of the translations covering the period from 1868 to the present time. Though the figure presented there is not an exact number of translated works, it does show a general tendency. Japanese interest in foreign literatures differs according to the period. British literature prevailed in the 1870's, 1880's and 1890's, and then came the vogue of Russian and French literature, and so on. On the other hand, the amount of translated works shows an increase or decrease according to social conditions. From these facts students can investigate the possible relation between cultural activities and political conditions, in relation to the acceptance of foreign literature.

The study of sources is also popular among students. Zola, Shakespeare, Goethe, Ibsen, Thomas Hardy and others have been studied by many. Besides these individual writers, several anthologies of Western poems in Japanese translation have been a great source of influence on modern Japanese poetry. It is not an exaggeration to say that "Shintaishi-sho", "Omokage", "Kai-cho-On", "Sango-sho" (collections of Western poems in Japanese) have given birth to modern Japanese poetry. Many students are investigating the influence of these anthologies on style, idea and vocabulary.

The reputation of foreign writers is also a favourite theme of Japanese comparatists. We have fine articles in this field about Charles Baudelaire, James Joyce, Walt Whitman, and others.

Together with these, there are research works in special fields. The influence of the theory of evolution, of Christianity, materialism, and existentialism have been studied to prove their relation to the development of modern Japanese literature.

Then there is another kind of study, that is, the study of the function of journals as a medium for transmitting foreign influences. There are several journals, such as "Bungaku-kai", "Kokumin-no-Tomo" and "Nihon-Shijin", which have had a deep relation to the introduction of foreign literature into Japan. In this connection I shall mention a book entitled "Waseda-Daigaku-to-Kindai-Bungei" ("Waseda University and Modern Literature"), several articles of which describe the activities of Waseda professors, who, from the 1880's to the present time, have been working for the introduction of Western literature into Japan. Their activities are investigated chronologically.

Next I should like to refer to the compiling of bibliographies. If we do not have an exhaustive bibliography, our research work will not produce fine results. I think Japanese comparatists have done a fine job in this field. Leading members of the Society have been encouraging young students to work on bibliographies. It is very hard to make a bibliography, and success can be obtained only with strenuous effort spread over a long time. Moreover, it is often difficult for students to find journals which will offer them enough space to publish their works. The two publications of the Society have been giving priority to the publishing of these bibliographies. The bibliographies of documents in Japan on the following writers have been published already—Heine, Goethe, Rilke, Zola, Maupassant, Daudet, Shakespeare, Thomas Hardy, H. G. Wells, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, T. S. Eliot, Poe, Hawthorne, O'Neill, Hemingway, Faulkner, Tagore. Some of these may be called nearly complete, and others may be partial ones. We have a peculiar one, that is a bibliography of Spanish literature in Japan. In the case of literatures which have only a few writers translated into Japanese, such bibliographies are more useful than those of individual writers.

The Japan PEN Club published in 1957 a book called "Footprints of Foreign Literature in Japan". This is a collection of two kinds of graphs. Graph A consists of seven charts, indicating the total number of translated works from thirty-three countries, arranged chronologically and covering the last ninety years. Graph B consists of thirteen

charts, indicating bibliographies of the following writers: Thomas Hardy, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Shakespeare, Maupassant, Gautier, Valéry, Zola, Heine, Rilke, Tagore, Poe, Whitman, in charts devised specially for the purpose. It gives all the documents distributed chronologically, and according to the character of the medium—daily papers, periodicals or books. Thus the reader can see how a certain writer has been introduced and accepted in Japan.

ST. JOHN ERVINE ON EUGENE O'NEILL

HORST FRENZ

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IRISH-BORN St. John Ervine, English author and critic, and Eugene Gladstone O'Neill, American playwright of Irish descent—both born in the eighties—have established a reputation in the field of the modern drama and the theatre far beyond the borders of their respective countries. Both have proved to be versatile men, but in different ways. After several years of being an active businessman, Ervine became the author of plays, novels, short stories, and biographies; he has also published books on playwriting, travel, religion, and politics. All his life has been spent in close touch with the theatre—for a short while he was manager of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin and for a long period dramatic and literary critic of the London *Observer*. During the theatre season of 1928-29 he served as guest critic on the New York *World* and, because of his severe reviews, became involved in a spirited feud with some of his New York fellow critics. However, in his dramatic writing, there is none of this versatility that is evident in his life. Restricted in content, most of his plays deal with contemporary Irish and English middle-class or lower-middle-class life; technically, they follow a highly conventional pattern. More concerned with the expression of ideas than of emotions, Ervine presents well-drawn characters reflecting a definite code of morality, and, in spite of their involvements in more or less serious conflicts, an orderly picture of life. In general, his are "well-made" realistic plays with interesting if at times melodramatic plots.

Eugene O'Neill, apart from his youthful wanderings and early shifting from job to job, has been exclusively a playwright. Except for a few very early and unsuccessful attempts at writing poetry and short stories, he has tried no other literary form. He has never acted as producer or manager of plays by others. He has expressed very few theories on drama and theatre and hardly ever commented on the work of other playwrights. Yet as a dramatist, O'Neill has shown a remarkable versatility. His dramatic work ranges from short one-act monologues to a cycle of three plays modelled on the Greek trilogy. He has explored every possible conventional theatrical device and suc-

needed in making new and sometimes quite startling use of old techniques. All his life he searched for new dramatic expression, never authentically satisfied with any one of his achievements to give up experimentation. It was this constant changing in O'Neill's technique which in 1926 prompted Ervine's comment that, by now, O'Neill should have found a form that would suit his purpose instead of wasting his energies by trying out new forms.¹ As far as the contents of his plays are concerned, O'Neill shows little of the optimism and idealism so characteristic of Ervine. Like many other contemporary writers he again and again expresses man's uncertainty in asserting his rightful place in the universe. His writings reflect a passionate groping for the answers to the problems the modern age has imposed on man.

For more than twenty-five years Ervine wrote numerous essays on O'Neill's plays and reviews of most of their productions in England. His first account appeared in the London *Observer* of 1921. Reviewing the performance of *Diff'rent* at the Everyman Theatre at Hampstead he wrote of the American playwright: "If his achievement is equal to his promise he will do for American drama what Walt Whitman did for American poetry and Mark Twain for American fiction."² A year later, in recommending a collection of early O'Neill plays to his readers, Ervine stated: "It is the work of a dramatist who has a poet's mood, and it is, perhaps, the most interesting book that has come out of America since Walt Whitman died."³ Ervine did not, however, maintain this favourable opinion of O'Neill's work; he soon felt that O'Neill had not fulfilled the promise shown in his early plays. The leading article in the April 10, 1948, issue of the *Times Literary Supplement* entitled *Counsels of Despair*⁴ repeats many of the charges Ervine has made against O'Neill throughout the years and may be considered as his final appraisal of him. An examination of the body of critical comments from the first review in 1921 to the summing up in 1948 provides a revealing study of the reception and interpretation of the work of this American dramatist by a British fellow writer. It shows how preconceived notions as to what is appropriate subject matter for dramatic treatment and rigid theories of play construction and conventions have affected the attitude of one of O'Neill's most prolific foreign critics.

In O'Neill's "apprentice" works — *The Moon of the Caribbees*, *Bound East for Cardiff*, *The Long Voyage Home*, *In the Zone*, *Ile*,

Where the Cross is Made, and *The Rope* — Ervine found unmistakable evidence of an unusual and original mind "which has not yet mastered its material, but is in the process of doing so."⁵ He called the first one-act plays good sketches of characters that actually live and are drawn with truth and vigour. He found "sea-air" in his works and a lack of theatricality that seemed to Ervine astonishing in a man with an unusual theatrical background.⁶ O'Neill searched for fresh experiences and had no use for the accepted conventions of the theatre. The writing in all his early works, which present men aspiring to greater things, displays real poetic feeling. In *The Hairy Ape* Ervine finds "the poetry of the inarticulate, the pride of labour, the manly joy in conflict and energy;" in *Anna Christie* he sees "something profoundly true, profoundly invigorating, profoundly moving."⁷ About *Beyond the Horizon*, which he on another occasion called the most human of O'Neill's plays, Ervine remarks that it "is suffused with poetry; beauty is present in its most painful passages; the people are real people, observed and understood."⁸

On the other hand, Ervine considered O'Neill's "preoccupation with disease, with primal facts and primitive natures" one of the major faults of his early work.⁹ In matters of form he thought O'Neill too prolific and verbose. He saw in the plays not only signs of haste but also a lack of economy and a wastefulness in developing his themes. He thought the first act of *Diff'rent* too long¹⁰; one act, divided into two scenes, should have sufficed in the case of *The First Man*; *Anna Christie* should have not more than three acts and *Beyond the Horizon* only three instead of six.¹¹

As to minor flaws in O'Neill's plays, Ervine commented on his fidelity to fact — instead of fidelity to imagination — which he felt often resulted in "continuous streams of gutter language." He held that O'Neill had failed to realize how easy it is "to mistake violence for strength and to imagine that a man is being vigorous when he is merely being foulmouthed."¹² These faults, however, did not seem to Ervine fundamental and were outweighed by O'Neill's good points.

From 1926 on, the tenor of Ervine's criticism changed. He felt O'Neill's continuous toying with technique was no longer excusable. *The Great God Brown* he called "a confused piece" because of the utter lack of economy in structure and of the attempt to experiment with masks.¹³ The first two scenes of *All God's Chillun Got Wings*, although written with vigour and vivacity, are too loosely constructed.

Interlude should have ended with the seventh scene.¹⁴ It is Irvine's contention that in all these plays O'Neill did not give his characters the consideration they deserve and that people appear on the stage and disappear without motivation.¹⁵

The play that Irvine particularly strongly condemned was *Desire Under the Elms*. Although O'Neill the poet had been struggling with O'Neill the sociologist, there has always been a lyrical note in his plays. In *Desire Under the Elms*, however, men are almost lower than the animals and their actions are revolting. "The play," Irvine maintains, "fills me with loathing for people, and gives me a disgust with life."¹⁶ Comparing the final scene of Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and Shelley's *The Cenci* with that of O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms*, he takes issue with the views of Barrett H. Clark who claims that there is true serenity in this scene of O'Neill's play. Irvine contends that the scene must be considered infinitely inferior to the other two for the reason that "its author is concerned with mean people caught in a net of 'crime and shame', whereas Hardy and Shelley occupy themselves with noble women in a similar net."¹⁷

In *Dynamo* and *Strange Interlude* Irvine sees evidence that to O'Neill human existence means nothing else but an "exhibition of dismal futility". Thus he concludes that O'Neill's poetic powers display a definite decline and that, instead of showing the qualities of a poet, he has decided to be "sour and incoherent and extraordinarily dismal."¹⁸ Irvine also objects to the use of asides in *Strange Interlude*, calling them an obsolete technique. He states with some satisfaction that there are fewer asides in *Dynamo*, although he thinks that in this play — to which at another time he refers as a very "silly" piece¹⁹ — the asides are far more arbitrarily introduced than in *Strange Interlude*.²⁰

Almost all the faults Irvine detected in O'Neill's earlier plays he finds combined and intensified in *Mourning Becomes Electra*. His chief objections are that O'Neill's characters lack magnitude and that he "deliberately reduces the stature of the people, making them mean and neurotic and hereditarily tainted." He also disapproves of O'Neill's "peculiar creed" that the inhabitants of New England are all sour-souled Puritans, so inbred that horror is the normal element in their lives and incest a daily occurrence among them.²¹ The once so promising playwright has become lost, Irvine thinks, in "pseudo-science" and "sham intellectuality" and instead of putting on the stage

real people he has manufactured puppets, the Mannons who bear "the strange impression of a life-like mask."²² The characters in *Mourning Becomes Electra* do not interest Ervine because they are spiritless — they do not fight adversity and do not show heroism in the face of destruction. Ervine categorically states that "tragedy is not concerned with the affairs of congenital idiots or the helpless victims of hereditary taints and diseases."²³

The last four acts in *Mourning Becomes Electra* seem to Ervine superfluous. Although O'Neill knows when to stop, his "infatuation with mere bulk and spread and size" makes him wilfully add these acts.²⁴ Ervine also sees a lack of serenity in the trilogy and charges that, whereas the poet is noticeable in all of O'Neill's first works, he is almost undetectable in *Mourning Becomes Electra*: "The frenetic preacher arguing more and more from abnormal cases" has taken the poet's place.²⁵ Ervine does not find one sentence which "glows with the poet's passion" nor one speech "which is memorable or quickened by the fire which burns in every poet's heart." He admits that there is power in O'Neill's work, but claims it is misdirected. It is only because of the merit of O'Neill's earlier works that he refuses to believe that the poet O'Neill is dead:

"What he most terribly needs is a shock such as Saul received on the road to Damascus. If he can be temporarily blinded by a vision from heaven, the poet in him will emerge and overcome and kill the peddler of second-hand thoughts. When that occurs to him, he will no longer see men as beasts walking under the elms. He will learn, first, that elms are beautiful, and second, that men still aspire to be gods..."²⁶

It should be noted here that to Ervine the basic conception of the trilogy seems false. It is impossible, he argues, to seek "to substitute an aesthetic or intellectual appreciation for an ethical or religious emotion." It is also impossible to write a modern psychological drama for an audience possessed of no belief in gods or moral retribution, and at the same time to approximate the Greek sense of destiny as O'Neill had hoped to do, for the simple reason that, in Ervine's opinion, the play will be effective only if the audience has at least some sense of fate.²⁷

Ervine thus comes to the conclusion that O'Neill does not fare well in comparison with the great Greek dramatists and that he will

hardly prove successful in competing with Shakespeare and Shaw, for there are no signs of growth in Mr. O'Neill's work. Mr. O'Neill does not grow; he merely enlarges."²⁸ O'Neill may only be called the "Marlowe of America, preparing the path for its Shakespeare," for O'Neill like Marlowe "sprawls and is humourless and inclined to let the ideologist in him usurp the place of the artist."²⁹ More than once, Ervine mistakenly assumes that just because O'Neill treated some of the same themes as those found in Aeschylus and Shakespeare he forced comparison with these great masters of tragedy.

In the fall of 1934, Ervine reviewed the British edition of *Ah! Wilderness* and *Days Without End*. He makes only a few comments on the first play, calling it a "small, sentimental comedy, constructed . . . with exceptional craft and skill" which has "the sort of tenderness that is emotionally effective" and in which the characters are "very deftly drawn."³⁰ He shows, however, great interest in *Days Without End* written "in a vein new to Mr. O'Neill." While he objects to some of O'Neill's "old and rather stupid stage tricks" and to certain "signs of hysteria", he approves of the spirit of the play:

"The bitterness, the sophomoric cynicism, the subjection of intellect to undisciplined emotion, the animal brutality, and the terrible hatred which defiled many of the plays up to and including *Mourning Becomes Electra* have almost disappeared or been reduced to proper proportions. A sense of human dignity under ordeal appears at last in Mr. O'Neill's mind, and the poet who revealed himself in *Beyond the Horizon*, but has been hidden ever since, is showing his head."

Ervine admits that *Days Without End* is written "in less vigorous language than that generally employed in Mr. O'Neill's work" and is "in places, clumsily constructed," but considers the defects of the play "almost a testimonial to its virtues." His conclusion is that the author of the play is "a new Mr. O'Neill, or rather the old Mr. O'Neill absolved from his obsession."³¹

It has already been mentioned that, in an article in the *Times Literary Supplement* of April 10, 1948, Ervine reiterated the charges which, in his various reviews, he had made against most of O'Neill's plays, using frequently even the identical words and phrases. The essay was written on the occasion of the British edition of O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh*. In line with his criticism of O'Neill's other

plays, Ervine admits that O'Neill has a certain sense of the theatre but disapproves of his verbosity. The play, he maintains, "is at least an hour too long." As to the characters, he gives the following verdict:

"There is nothing here of courage and endurance, nothing of unflinching faith, nothing of self-sacrifice deliberately made. The O'Neill world is a dirty pub, frequented by drunks and disorderlies and shiftless loafers; and periodically raided by corrupt cops."

Ervine resents the implication that because the protagonist, Theodore Hickman, was a puritanical minister's son, he was bound to go to the devil, and objects to the large gathering of low-grade characters who are "uttering very vigorously the language of the stews." To sum up his attitude toward the American playwright who irritated and antagonized him because he did not develop according to his earlier predictions, he uses the symbol of the fog which prevailed at the production of O'Neill's first play in the tiny wharf playhouse in Provincetown. The fog, Ervine maintains, entered O'Neill's soul that night in Provincetown and remained there throughout his life. He thus concludes his essay:

"The fog has thickened in *The Iceman Cometh*; a thick, yellow, suffocating fog; and it makes Larry Slade, the spineless Celt, a convert to death, too cowardly to seek the end he craves. When Faustus, in Marlowe's play, summoned Alexander the Great and Helen of Troy from the grave, they came, but did not speak. Like Bottom, they had been translated, and the mind of man could not conceive what they had seen. But when Mr. O'Neill, in *Lazarus Laughed*, summons the brother of Martha and Mary from the tomb, Lazarus comes in a fit of the giggles. Even the giggles have ceased for Larry Slade. There is nothing left for him but a delusive bottle and the hope that he will one day die of delirium tremens."

From Ervine's frequent comments on playwriting and dramatic literature one concludes that as a critic he has three chief criteria for judging a play: First, is every part of the play essential? Second, do the characters behave in the way in which such people would behave in real life? Third, is the author's view of life as expressed in his work true and sound?³²

With regard to the first criterion, Ervine may be justified to some extent in pointing out O'Neill's lack of economy of structure, for it is true that often his characters are introduced or dropped without

motivation, that whole scenes can be cut out without leaving a wound or even a scar in the play.³³ One may also agree with Ervine that "redundancy or repetition, in character or in situation or in speech . . . can rarely be used with effect by the dramatist,"³⁴ and that the unusual length of some of O'Neill's plays, instead of being effective, has frequently resulted in wearing audiences instead of enthralling them. On the other hand, this insistence on conventional form prevents Ervine from giving adequate credit to experimentation — by O'Neill as well as other modern playwrights — which has to a considerable degree been responsible for creating new life in the twentieth century theatre.

Ervine approved of *Beyond the Horizon* because, among other things, he found in it real people, and he condemned *Mourning Becomes Electra* because he considered the Mannon only puppets. Evidently he does not seem to see that in the latter play — as well as in *Desire Under the Elms* — the conclusion grows inevitably out of the peculiar nature of the characters and the circumstances in which they find themselves involved. After all, that is exactly what Ervine claims should be the final test of a play, a test which, however, is somewhat modified by his admission that he does not believe in "a painful portrayal of a painful or squalid subject."³⁵ Furthermore, he insists that, in spite of the circumstances, the hero or the heroine must rise and assure the human dignity. In his own plays, *Jane Clegg* and *John Ferguson*, for instance, Ervine has indeed drawn such characters of strong will and high character, but O'Neill has deliberately portrayed people of a different nature. They do not pass Ervine's standard of realism, but they are nevertheless real.³⁶

Closely related to the problem of reality is the third criterion based upon the soundness of an author's "view of life." Ervine charges that too many modern plays have been tragedies of impotence and regrets that

"the heroic figure, protesting to heaven that he has some rights in his own soul, has disappeared from the stage, and in its place we are given a weak and spineless creature who asserts, when he is prepared to assert anything, that he is a victim of circumstances, and has no responsibilities for his behaviour."³⁷

The modern drama of Europe and North America, according to Ervine, is more akin to the drama of Greece, i.e., "the tragedy of

impotence and foredoomed men" than to that of Elizabethan England, i.e., "the tragedy of power and of men who have some decision over their destiny."³⁸ But the Greeks, Ervine continues, at least went to the grave with some nobility, while "these moderns meanly crawl into it."³⁹ Consideration of an author's view of life may for any critic be a valuable clue to his understanding of a piece of drama; however, one's agreement or disagreement with such a view is a rather doubtful criterion for determining how good a play really is. As a result, it is difficult for Ervine to judge the quality of a play in which O'Neill presents a view of life which he would not consider true and sound. It has, for instance, led him to be favourably inclined toward a play like *Days Without End* and to give it undue praise.

O'Neill, in many of his dramas, has treated the sufferings of derelicts, degenerates, and outcasts because they seem to him as worthy of dramatic treatment as those of "heroic" people.⁴⁰ He is interested in unusual men and women who are seldom righteous or sophisticated or educated, but more often mean, neurotic and unregenerate. He does not care in which social strata they are to be found so long as they provide intense dramatic material. Ervine has repeatedly acknowledged his respect for O'Neill's dramatic sense, but he denies him the title of a poet because he dislikes most of O'Neill's characters who, as he thinks, "resemble those characters who, having emerged from primeval slime, will not be happy until they have returned to it;"⁴¹ he deplores the absence of noble characters that aspire to higher things and do not deserve misfortune.⁴² Thus, in the light of his own personal strictures, Ervine's objections to the "ineffectual egotists", spineless characters, and mindless creatures in such plays as *The Hairy Ape*, *All God's Chillun Got Wings*, and *The Iceman Cometh*, his rejection of the "pseudo-Greek" treatment of *Mourning Becomes Electra*, his preference for *Beyond the Horizon* and *Days Without End*,⁴³ and his impatience with the development of the American dramatist become understandable. Yet, in spite of his genuine interest in and sincere concern for O'Neill's work, it is difficult to accept Ervine's evaluation as a valid appraisal of the work of America's foremost dramatist.

¹ *The Observer* (London), October 31, 1926.

² *Ibid.* October 9, 1921. In this review Ervine informs us that three distinguished dramatists, Bernard Shaw, Alfred Sutro, and Lord Dunsany attended the performance of O'Neill's *Diff'rent* (and *Suppressed Desires* by George C. Cook and Susan Claspell) at the Everyman Theatre at Hampstead. Norman MacKenzie, the director of the playhouse, had selected the two American plays for the inauguration of an international season.

³ This review of *Plays: First Series—The Straw, The Emperor Jones, and The Great God Brown*, London 1921, appeared in *The Observer*, June 11, 1922.

⁴ The editors have confirmed my conclusion that the article was written by Mr. John Ervine.

⁵ Introduction to *The Moon of the Caribbees and Six Other Plays of the Sea*, London 1923.

⁶ Cf. the following statement from Ervine's *How to Write a Play*, New York 1920, p. 121: "... The apprentice dramatist should remember my definition of a good dramatist as a man who goes into the theatre and never comes out of it again. A good dramatist is a man who constantly checks the creatures of his imagination with the creatures he discovers about him."

⁷ *The Observer*, May 3, 1923.

⁸ *Ibid.*, October 31, 1926. See also *The Organized Theatre*, New York 1924, p. 119.

⁹ *The Observer*, May 27, 1923.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, October 9, 1921.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, May 27, 1923.

¹² Introduction to the British edition of *The Moon of the Caribbees and Six Other Plays of the Sea*.

¹³ *The Observer*, October 31, 1926.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, March 13, 1932.

¹⁵ See Ervine's article, *Is O'Neill's Power in Decline?*, *Theatre Magazine*, vol. XLIV, 1926, p. 12.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *The Observer*, October 29, 1933. A discussion of Ervine's comments on *The Cenci* as an acting play will be found in a study of *The Stage History of Shelley's 'The Cenci'* by Kenneth N. Cameron and Horst Frenz in *PMLA*, vol. LX, 1945, pp. 1080-1105.

¹⁸ New York 'World', February 13, 1929.

¹⁹ *The Plight of the Little Theatre*, *Theatre Arts Monthly*, vol. XV, 1931, p. 539.

²⁰ New York 'World', February 13, 1929.

²¹ *The Observer*, March 20, 1932.

²² Quoted from the stage directions to *Mourning Becomes Electra* in *The Observer*, March 27, 1932.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, March 13, 1932.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, October 29, 1933.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, March 27, 1932.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, March 20, 1932.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, October 29, 1933.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, March 27, 1932.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, October 7, 1934. In the Times Literary Supplement of April 10, 1948, Ervine calls *Ah! Wilderness* a "charming, almost conventional, comedy . . . a surprising piece, because of its sanity and normal, likeable, people."

²⁹ The Observer, October 7, 1934. Here Ervine reiterated his objections to *Strange Interlude* and *Mourning Becomes Electra* which he called "plainly and plumbly tosh." Of the latter he said that it "means exactly nothing at all; a long barbaric yawp at the universe."

³⁰ Cf. *The Organized Theatre, How to Write a Play*, and particularly *The Realistic Test in Drama*, The Yale Review, vol. XI, 1922, pp. 285-303.

³¹ "If the scene can be removed without a wound or scar, then it has no business to be in the play at all; it is mere padding, mere fat. . ." *How to Write a Play*, p. 121.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 38.

³³ *The Realistic Test in Drama*, The Yale Review, vol. XI, p. 285.

³⁴ In an article on *Realism and St. John Ervine*, The Sewanee Review, vol. XXXIII, 1925, pp. 199-209, Professor Homer E. Woodbridge points out that Ervine's realistic test does not offer any standard according to which the quality of a play may be judged.

³⁵ *The Organized Theatre*, p. 89. In an unpublished dissertation, *The Dramas and Dramatic Criticism of St. John Greer Ervine*, Bloomington, Indiana, 1949, Professor Virginia A. Haile shows that Ervine voices the same objections to all expressionistic plays and to much of the dramatic writing of the era after World War I.

³⁶ *The Organized Theatre*, p. 88.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

³⁸ Professor Frank H. Freed in *Eugene O'Neill in the Ascendant*, Theatre Magazine, vol. XLIV, 1926, pp. 30, 60, refutes some of Ervine's objections by pointing out that the English critic's lack of appreciation derives from the belief that, following Aristotle, great drama must treat persons of either high rank or some importance and that every play should contain "at least one lyrical summons to a higher order of things." As we know, in some of the later plays O'Neill has treated people of a higher social rank.

³⁹ The Observer, October 29, 1933.

⁴⁰ "The spectacle of a good man struggling with adversity ennobles the observer, but the spectacle of a bad man yielding to adversity depresses him." The Observer, October 29, 1933.

⁴¹ In 1936, Ervine wrote to William Lyon Phelps: "... I'd give the whole of *Strange Interlude* and *Mourning Becomes Electra* for the poetic spirit that suffused *Beyond the Horizon*. But I've not lost hope of O'Neill. The poet in him is not dead, but snoring. Why don't you wake him up?" *William Lyon Phelps, Autobiography with Letters*, New York 1939, pp. 727-728.

TAGORE IN TRANSLATION

BUDDHADEVA BOSE

The Collected Poems and Plays of Rabindranath Tagore (Macmillan, London, first edition, 1936) is a curiously confusing book. For one thing, it is a misnomer, not being a collection in any sense, and for another it makes Tagore an 'English' poet, which he was not. I have seen no other volume of translated literature which is not declared as such, and few which fail to mention the language of the original. The translator or translators are almost always named, and an attempt is very often made (in the publisher's blurb, if not more substantially) to introduce the foreign work or author to the public relying on the language of the translation. All this is so much a part of modern practice that, if Tagore's tongue were Danish or Yiddish or Serbo-Croat, Westerners would have been shocked to find a translated work masquerading as an original. Nowhere in the *Collected Poems and Plays* it is as much as hinted that its entire contents are translations, and most of them¹ made by the author; the very existence of the Bengali language is serenely ignored.² And it was from the English that translations were made into other non-Indian languages, with the result that even during his years of spectacular success in the world, relatively few people clearly realised that Tagore was a *Bengali* poet who occasionally translated from his work, but wrote poems, plays and novels in *only* Bengali.³ To this day, most Westerners are blandly vague on this point: 'which language did Tagore write in?' is a question I have been often asked in the Occident. Speaking in Calcutta in 1960, the British poet, Mr. Stephen Spender referred to 'the poems Tagore wrote in English' in the same way as one would mention the French poems of Rilke,⁴ and Mr. Alberto Moravia, Italy's delegate to a centennial conference held in Bombay in 1961, was manifestly uncertain about the language of Tagore.⁵ Young Indians, who fondly believe they can become 'English' poets, cite Tagore as a glorious example and precedent, for did he not write his *Gitanjali* in English and hit the Nobel Prize? This is a sorry mess for a poet to be in, and it owes its origin to the fact that Tagore was, and still is, known to the world through translations not properly and adequately acknowledged to be so.⁶ Another

result of this extraordinary situation is notable: Tagore as a *translator* has not received sufficient attention from critics. Edward Thompson, who knew Bengali, did touch on this point in his two very readable books on Tagore,⁷ but there is room for a closer examination.

II

Tagore's situation was indeed extraordinary, we could almost say unnatural. Unnatural, because it is generally and universally true that poets can be poets, and translators, translators, in only their mother-tongue, and Tagore is the only major poet we know of who translated his own works into a foreign language. Baudelaire made Poe a great man in France, but he left it to Swinburne and Symonds to import Baudelaire into England. Rilke translated Valéry into German, but not Rilke into French, despite his having been almost naturalised in Paris. The writer who is genuinely and creatively bilingual (like Samuel Beckett) is the rarest of phenomenons, and Tagore, though a wonder in his way, certainly did not belong to this category. Nor was he a translator by temperament; for him translation was not a part of the poetic vocation. In his boyhood he had a tutor who made him translate the whole of *Macbeth* into Bengali verse, of which an interesting fragment has survived. Translations (from European poets and from Sanskrit) form a part of his early writings, but they disappear as the poet matures, and are replaced by spontaneous paraphrases from Kālidāsa and the Upaniṣads. Though his total output is varied and vast, he has left no more than one translated (Bengali) poem which we can take seriously—a version of *Journey of the Magi* which he made in old age, not because he admired Eliot,⁸ but because he was experimenting with the prose-poem. His genius was too happy, too ample, and too exuberant for the humble and laborious task of translation, which involves an act of self-denial. Moreover, Tagore was no Hindu College boy,⁹ no Anglo-maniac mouthing his Byron and Shakespeare; his relations with the English language, far from admitting colonial zeal, remained within the limits of polite friendliness. How was it, then, that he who had scarcely thought it worth his while to translate from other languages into Bengali, suddenly took it into his head to render his poems in a language which was much more alien to him than let us say French

of 1912, and in which, before then, he had probably not written a line outside letters to non-Bengalis?

It was an accident, a stroke of luck, at least the version of *Gitanjali* that we have, and this is all we can say about it. Tagore started on these translations in the seclusion of his favourite country-house at Shilaidah, half in play, to beguile a tedious convalescence and keep himself occupied until his health permitted him to sail for Europe. He was not strong enough either to take complete rest or girt himself to some real writing,' as he wrote to a niece later.¹⁰ It was the spring of 1912; Tagore was restless; he had a strange longing for the Occident which he had not visited for twenty-two years. Aboard a London-bound boat a few weeks later, he continued this 'game' until 'one notebook overflowed into another,' but little did he imagine that these plain prose-poems in a foreigner's English would be worth anybody's attention. In London he timidly handed them to William Rothenstein, the painter, whom he had met before in Calcutta, and who wished to see some of his poetry. Rothenstein was excited by what he read and sent out typed copies to his literary friends. The success that followed within a few months was not only unexpected for Tagore but unprecedented in history. Never before him had a poet become overnight so famous in foreign lands.

Years later, Tagore would sometimes recall that summer evening at Rothenstein's Hampstead home, when Yeats read out from *Gitanjali* (in typescript) to a small group: how, after the reading, the 'stolid Englishmen' left without a word of comment, and how Tagore's heart sank at the thought that he had 'brought shame not only on himself but his country.'¹¹ But on the next day came letters from the guests of the evening—letters which startled their recipient, whom it took some time to realise that they were 'quite sincere.'¹² Actually the effect of that evening was tremendous; it changed the life of at least one Englishman, C. F. Andrews, who was then a missionary and who gave up his Mission to become a staunch friend of Tagore and a habitu   of Santiniketan. As he walked back from Rothenstein's home with a friend, Andrews 'spoke very little for he wanted to be alone and think in silence of the wonder and glory of it all.'¹³ Among others who read or heard *Gitanjali* in manuscript, Rothenstein felt the poetry to be 'on a level with that of the great mystics,'¹⁴ and Andrew Bradley was persuaded that there was 'at last a great poet among us again.'¹⁵ Yeats thought Tagore was

'greater than any of us,'¹⁶ and when *Gitanjali* appeared in print, Ezra Pound discovered 'our new Greece, suddenly.'¹⁷ While the decision to award the Nobel Prize to Tagore was being taken in Stockholm, Per Hallstrom, member-secretary of the Nobel Committee, said in his official report that 'no poet in Europe since the death of Goethe . . . could rival Tagore,' and to offer this poet a monetary prize was almost an act of sacrilege, comparable to 'paying for the Psalms of David or the songs of St. Francis.'¹⁸ When we remember that the object of these comments was a volume of *translated contemporary* poetry, this immediate and universal acclaim cannot but seem fabulous.

III

'*Gitanjali*,' I wrote many years ago, 'is a miracle of translation. The miracle is not that so much has survived; but the pomes are re-born in the process, the flowers bloom anew on a foreign soil. Denuded of the sensuous metrical arrangements of the original and the more than Swinburnian rhymes, they are more quiet in the English, more docile, the surrender is more utter. The Song Offerings are more of song in the original and more of an offering in the English. . . . There are moments when the translation surpasses the original. . . .'¹⁹

I no longer see *Gitanjali*, or Tagore, as I did when I wrote these lines, but I quote them as an impression of one reader familiar with the original, and because I find myself in partial agreement. Time has changed or modified many of my notions, but I still feel that *Gitanjali* in English is more than a *tour de force* and it would not be wrong to attribute its genesis to a genuinely creative impulse. If Tagore was obliged to be *led* by another poet, this impulse would not have carried him far, but he was translating himself and could take all kinds of liberties.²⁰ It is on record that while composing the Bengali lyrics, he was like a haunted man, roaming at night among the *shāl* trees of Santiniketan, filling pages while travelling by trains or bullock-carts, piling up as many as five or six during a single day. Of this mood of rapture it seems these translations were a by-product: we should note that in the spring and summer of 1912 he was at the same time translating and writing new pieces in Bengali. Thus, as Thompson has noted, the English *Gitanjali* became 'essentially a new

work, and Tagore's personality . . . passed into it."²¹ This is no small achievement for a poet using a foreign tongue.

(But do the translations really 'surpass the originals'—here and there? This much can be said on this point: that some poems and passages which have received but small attention from even fervent Tagorites in Bengal, become quite striking in their English counterparts. Tagore had some of the characteristics of Shelley*—preference for 'cosmic' (over concrete) imagery, love of abandon, an unconscious identification of poetry with 'spontaneous overflow.' I think, though, that he was wary while working on these translations, for the language offered greater resistance. Tagore's attitude to English was that of a cultured and diffident foreigner: so he chose his words and strove to improve upon himself, clipping his innate abundance to suit a rather more austere taste. The unfortunate result of this is that literary or 'precious' tone which clings to whole of the English volume, but on the credit side are a poem or two freed from the blemishes (if also the spontaneity) of the Bengali. An example is the very opening poem of *Gitanjali*, adapted from poem number 23 of the Bengali volume *Gitimālya*,²² of which, in order to make the comparison clear, I present a flatly literal translation:

You have made me endless
 Such is your *lilā* (love-play).
 You have finished me and filled me again
 Repeatedly with fresh life.
 Over how many hills, along how many river-banks
 Have you carried this little flute
 And played on it tune after tune—
 To whom shall I say!

At that immortal touch of yours
 My heart
 Loses its limits in immense joy
 And speech overflows.

* When Yeats (in his Introduction) said that the *Gitanjali* poems were 'as much a growth of the common soil as the grass and rushes,' or when Pound saw in them a 'new Greece' or 'twelfth-century Provence,' they were stating *their* ideals of poetry rather than the reality of Tagore. They were dreaming of a new kind of poetry, and on a momentary impulse they attributed their own aims to this remarkable Hindu. But of course they could not have *studied* Tagore, being ignorant of him and Bengali poetry outside the English *Gitanjali*, and it needs no saying that the poems of Pound or Yeats are not like Tagore's at all.

Filling this little hand of mine
 Day and night you are bringing me gifts,
 Through many an age it has not ended,
 Ever shall I receive.

And this is Tagore's English :

Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail vessel
 thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life.

This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales,
 and hast breathed through it melodies eternally new.

At the immortal touch of thy hands my little heart loses its
 limits in joy and gives birth to utterance ineffable.

Thy infinite gifts come to me only on these very small hands
 of mine. Ages pass, and still thou pourest, and still there is room
 to fill.

When allowances have been made for the demoded and over-polished language, which was the only kind of English available to Tagore, we shall be in a better position to see the merits of this version. The original is like something in Rilke's *Book of Hours* ('What will you do, God, when I die?/When I, your broken pitcher, lie?'), easily felt and smoothly expressed; this particular Bengali poem has a rather casual air. The last line of the first stanza weakly supplies a rhyme; 'and speech overflows' is not syntactically connected with the preceding passage; the concluding line makes no impact in the Bengali. In the English the 'frail vessel' introduces a visual image but blunts the immediacy of the original; the substitution of 'dales' for 'river-banks' is an unfortunate Anglicism; and words like 'eternal', 'immortal', 'ineffable' and 'infinite', all packed in the space of five sentences, do not contribute to intensity. Nevertheless, the poem is effective as a whole, because its last verse suddenly gains in power and clarity; out of the vague 'ever shall I receive' leaps a statement which is both authentic and bold. '*Ages pass, and still thou pourest, and still there is room to fill.*' Nowhere does the original touch the height of this line.

Another example is poem number 67 of the English *Gitanjali*, of which the eighty-first poem of *Naivedya* is the original. The Bengali has a remarkable opening line, but, as is not infrequent in Tagore, the pitch is not sustained. End-stop lines and an unvarying rhyme-

some *couplets* and so on) make it monotonous to read; and although there are no more than fourteen lines, redundant words are not lacking. The passage which Ezra Pound found 'like some pure Hellenic,' is admirably compressed in translation.

Here Dawn, holding a golden plate in her right hand,
 Brings a garland of sweetness
 Silently to place it on the forehead of the earth.

(*Literal translation.*)

Tagore's English:

There comes the morning with the golden basket in her right hand
 bearing the wreath of beauty, silently to crown the earth.

Here, too, the images are Anglicised or Westernised ('basket' for 'plate', 'wreath' for 'garland'), but this has been for the better, especially because the original errs in placing the garland, not around the neck (which is the right place for it), but the 'forehead', a word forced by an exigency of rhyme, in the Bengali. Also, the final couplet is beautifully transformed.

*Din nāi, rātri nāi, nāi janaprāni,
 Barna nāi, gandha nāi, nāi, nāi bāni.*

There is no day, no night, no living beings,
 No colour, no smell,—and no, no words.

(*Literal translation.*)

Six of the thirteen words in the original are *nāi* (no, not), and perhaps it is not necessary to know Bengali to see that this repetition, instead of being poetically evocative, loosens the bow-string exactly when it should be tense. This tightening takes place in the English, where the 'living beings' are dropped, 'colour or smell' becomes 'form or colour' (form carrying the idea of the 'living beings' and much else besides), and the thought is uttered with a calm simplicity.

There is no day nor night, nor form nor colour, and never, never
 a word.

IV

These examples may lend some support to my earlier statement: that *Gitanjali*, by being 'denuded of metre and rhyme,' becomes 'more of an offering in the English.' Yet I feel like quarrelling with myself for having said this; for the poems of which this is true are rare, and the absence of metre and rhyme must on the whole be regarded as a very serious loss. For Tagore at his best is a master of the craft of verse—meaning verse in its narrower sense of metrical composition; there is nothing in his English prose to compensate for the lack of those hypnotic sound-combinations, with which, when he is really doing his job, he can make us swoon with delight. Some translations, it may be, convey the substance so well that the reader does not notice the lacuna; in some others the rendering is inadequate *because* the sound-pattern produces no sensuous excitement. Let me offer two examples, with Tagore's English placed after the corresponding originals.*

- A. Āji srāvan-ghana | gahan-mohe |
 Gopan taba | charan phele |
 Nishār mato | nirab ohe |
 Shabār diṭhi | èḍāye ele. |
 Prabhāt āji | mudechhe ākhi, |
 Bātāsh bṛthā | jeteche dāki, |
 Nilāj nil | ākāsh dhāki |
 Nibiḍ megh | ke dilo mele. |

* My transcription of Bengali passages is roughly phonetic, and here is a key to pronunciation. The vowels *e*, *i* and *u* are as in Italian, and *o* is like *eau* in French. The Bengali *a* is difficult to define, for it ranges between the French *o* (as in *vol*) and the English long *o* (as in *go*), and becomes indistinguishable from the Bengali *o* when followed by a letter with *i* or *u* in it, and often at the end of words. Thus, *bandhu* and *gabhir* sound like *bondhu* and *gobhir*, and *tama* and *mama* like *tamo* and *mamo*. There are words where *e* is pronounced like the Anglo-Saxon *a* (as in *man*), and this I have indicated by writing *è*. The ~ sign over a vowel means it is nasalised. A consonant conjoined with a *v* is doubled: thus, *shvapan*=*shhapan*. *Ṛ* is a vowel where *r* is added to *i*; it is phonetically lighter than *ri*. There are no silent letters, double consonants are pronounced as such; there is a clear distinction between *k* and *kh*, *ch* and *chh*, and so on, and also between *t* and *ṭ*, the former having the French, and the latter the English sound of the consonant. Pronounce *ch* as in *charm*, *g* as in *go*; do not slur the *rs*. *D* and *ḍ* also correspond to the French and English sounds, but *ḍ* also represents a hard *r* (somewhat like *rh*), as in 'nibiḍ' and 'jhaḍer.' The long *ī* and *ū* exist in Bengali spelling but not pronunciation.

I have indicated the metrical feet in both the poems. Bengali verse is quantitative.

Kujanhin | kānanbhumī |
 Duār deoyā | shakal ghare, |
 Êkelā kon | pathik tumi |
 Pathikhin | pather pare. |
 He êkā shakhā, | he priyatama, |
 Royechhe kholā | e ghar mama, |
 Shamukh diye | shvapan shama |
 Jeyo nā more | hēlāy thele. |

(No. 18, *Gītāñjali*, Bengali.)

In the deep shadows of the rainy July, with secret steps, thou
 walked, silent as night, eluding all watchers.

To-day the morning has closed its eyes, heedless of the insistent
 calls of the loud east wind, and a thick veil has been drawn over
 the ever-wakeful blue sky.

The woodlands have hushed their songs, and doors are all shut
 at every house. Thou art the solitary wayfarer in this deserted
 street. Oh, my only friend, my best beloved, the gates are open
 in my house—do not pass by like a dream.

(No. 22, *Gitanjali*, English.)

Pound quoted this with approbation in his *Fortnightly Review*
 article, but how good an English poem is it, really? I am afraid I
 can scarcely judge, my head being full of the pulse and beat of the
 Bengali. I invite the reader to read the original a few times, slowly
 and aloud, to get some idea of its music. Take the first two lines:
gujan (name of a month), *gahan* (deep), *gopan* (secret), *charan*
 (feet) — a lovely pile of middle rhymes, but not a word out of place
 or without significance. Follows the caressing consonance of *nishār*
 (of the night), *nirab* (silent) and *shabār* (of all), and then another
 series of *ns*, in which *nilāj nil ākāsh* (unabashed blue sky) is balanced
 by *nibid megh* (dense clouds), with *ākāsh* (sky) forming a middle
 rhyme with *bātāsh* (wind) in the preceding line. The second stanza
 plays with *ks* and *ps*, with *n* and the long vowel *ā* as constant
 factors; the effect of the whole is like a humming legato tune played
 on the violin. The note of prayer is sounded in the words themselves
 and not their meaning only. All this is lost in translation, but what
 the Bengali poem says is re-stated fairly fully; and the effect of this
 is considerable.

B. Āji jhaḍer rāte | tomār abhi | shār,
 Parānshakhā bandhu he ā | mār.

Ākāsh kāde | hatāsh shama |
 Nāi je ghum | nayane mama, |
 Duār khuli | he priyatama, |
 Chāi je bāre | bār.
 Parānshakhā | bandhu he ā | mār.

Bāhire kichhu | dekhite nāhi | pāi,
 Tomār path | kothāy bhābi | tāi.
 Shudur kon | nadir pāre, |
 Gahan kon | baner dhāre, |
 Gabhir kon | andhakāre |
 Hotechho tumi | pār,
 Parānshakhā | bandhu he ā | mār.

(No. 20, *Gītāñjali*, Bengali.)

Art thou abroad on this stormy night on thy journey of love,
 my friend? The sky groans like one in despair.

I have no sleep to-night. Ever and again I open my door and
 look out on the darkness, my friend!

I can see nothing before me. I wonder where lies my path!

By what dim shore of the ink-black river, by what far edge of
 the frowning forest, through what mazy depth of gloom art thou
 threading thy course to me, my friend!

(No. 23, *Gitanjali*, English.)

The two poems have the same theme and metre, the same setting of a stormy night; in both the dominant vowel is the long *ā*, and *n* is frequent; common to both are some words, images and one whole set of rhymes (shama-mama-tama); they were composed on contiguous dates during the same rainy month and almost read like two versions of the same poem. In the Bengali both are fine, both valid as poetry (apart from the religious overtones); but I do not think there is anything in A to compare with the music and feeling of the last five lines of B. The spell of these lines makes the hypercritical reader overlook the earlier repetition of *je* (a particle denoting emphasis) and the pallor of the rhyme *pāi-tāi*. But what happens to these lines in translation? The 'far-away' river becomes 'ink-black,' the 'dense' forest is made to 'frown', and the simple 'deep' darkness is expanded to a 'mazy depth of gloom.' The English words come from literature and not life. Also, the English paragraphs do not correspond to the Bengali stanzas (as they do in the preceding and many another poem), which mars the organisation of the whole. The refrain,

the 'Parānshakhā' *bāndhu he amār*, with its striking use of two epithets (the first *amār* both literally meaning 'friend' but one with the connotation of 'lover')—this beautiful refrain is ruined in the English version. Baudelaire's 'mon enfant, ma sœur' was translated 'my child', or Hamlet's 'King, father, royal Dane' represented by a simple epithet. This poem, so moving in the Bengali, has surely been noticed by Tagore's foreign admirers, while some of the other pieces—as a Bengali would see them—have received high praise from Gide. But such surprises are usual in translations, especially those made by poets, and that they occur in some of Tagore's is itself a mark of their worth.

V

If Tagore had stopped with *Gitanjali*, or added only *The Post Office* and selections from *The Gardener*, lovers of rarities might still have borrowed for his first editions in Charing Cross and Third Avenue. But it was his destiny to become a great man at the cost of his poetic reputation, outside the area of his own language. As one looks through the *Collected Poems and Plays*, one notices a progressive deterioration; there are pieces which it is painful to read, and much more to talk about. It is difficult to imagine a Westerner coming upon a line like 'My soul goes out in a longing to touch the skirt of the dim distance,' (No. 5, *The Gardener*) or 'We are to play the game of death tonight, my bride and I,' (No. 82, *ibid.*) and not saying to himself: 'Heavens! Tagore wrote this!' Well, the fact is he did not. 'The skirt of the dim distance', so hard to visualise, does not exist in the original where the 'great far-away' is directly invoked and rhyme and rhythm echo the 'flute' which this far-away is playing. As for the 'game of death', it is played—and played voluntarily—by the poet *with* Life, whom he later calls his 'life-bride'—the beloved one. 'Tonight I will play a game of death with my life': thus begins the original, and fatal to it are the alteration of 'I will'

* *Parānshakhā* (companion of the heart) is an unusual combination, suggesting emotional pressure. *Abhishār*, used in the opening line, is a key-word of the poem, and it evokes the perilous trips taken by the Vaishnavic Rādhā to meet her lover, who is divine but does not lack any of the human and erotic attributes. In this context, which no one can miss in the original, *parānshakhā* assumes a dimension which the English utterly fails to suggest. It is notable that the word *shakhā* also occurs in the companion poem.

to 'We are to' and the failure to announce at once that the 'bride' is no other than Life itself. In fact the identification of the 'bride' and Life never takes place in the English; and the heart of the poem is taken out of it by the very opening phrase, which uses a dull 'we' instead of the strong 'I' of the original, and waters down 'will' to 'are to', suggesting compulsion by some external agency, or mere passivity. When this is added to the loss of *form* (compounded of metre, rhyme and stanzaic device), nothing of the poem can be said to have survived.

Such examples are plentiful in volumes other than *Gitanjali*. Of them we can generally say that the lines become flaccid, the words lose flavour and rhythm; the sap, the spirit, is gone. Sometimes it is difficult to see what is it that makes a *poem* of a group of ten or twelve prose sentences; the arrangement of paragraphs (notable in *Gitanjali*) breaks down into loose and discrete sentences. Refrains, used in the originals with great frequency and hardly less effect, trail in the English like wearisome repetitions. It is true that Tagore in Bengali is sometimes diffuse and long-winded; had not the mature poet cut down some of his youthful productions to less than half their original length, it is doubtful whether their value would have ever been appreciated. It is possible to think of more poems which would have gained by similar revision, but this does not mean there are not many others which fully justify their length. And we are left gaping by the cuts that Tagore makes in very many English versions; indeed it seems strange that a poet should have treated his own work with such scant respect. Excisions (whether or not indicated by a row of dots) are made in a fashion so arbitrary as to produce an effect of incoherence and ineptitude. 'An insult to the original,' is what Thompson said of poem number 42 in *Lover's Gift*;²³ the remark was just and it is applicable to many other pieces. Ravishing lyrics are mutilated out of recognition (Nos. 5, 10 and 12 of *The Gardener*, to mention only a few); great poems, comparable to the best of any Romantic, are simply demolished and obliterated: I am thinking particularly of Nos. 7, 42 and 81 of *The Gardener*. The nadir is reached in *Stray Birds*,* containing aphorisms like 'In heart's per-

* Thompson noted that Tagore's titles, 'in the Bengali so splendid always, were sugared' in English. *The Crescent Moon*, *The Gardener*, *Fruit-Gathering*, *Lover's Gift*, *Stray Birds*, *The Fugitive*: not one sounds like a volume of serious poetry. And only one of these has a counterpart in Bengali.

the distance looms large' and 'We live in this world when
 the best comment is silence.

It is not surprising that while Tagore the public man made a reputation of the world, his reputation as a poet went under. In the London set which had discovered and sponsored the poet of *Gitanjali* and which included Yeats and Robert Bridges, the initial enthusiasm was followed by indifference, if not revulsion. The first to recoil was young Pound, for within six months of sending a batch of *Gitanjali* poems to *Poetry* (along with warm commendation), Pound said that Tagore was not indispensable as a religious preacher and of no particular use to the tormented Western man.²⁴ Yeats held on a little longer, but writing to Rothenstein in (probably) 1935, he expressed himself without equivocation. 'We got out three good books, Tagore, Moore and I, and then, because he [Tagore] thought it more important to see and know English than to be a great poet, he brought out sentimental rubbish and wrecked his reputation....'²⁵ One wonders what Yeats meant by 'seeing' English (a slip? a misprint?), but the drift is unmistakable: within two decades of his ascendancy, Tagore, the poet, was finished in the Occident. Thompson neatly summed up the situation when he wrote, with as much tact as objectivity, that the West 'felt that it could not judge of his work—the poems in translation, at any rate, did not seem to amount to a tremendous deal—but it could feel the greatness of his mind and soul.'²⁶

The intervening decades have not helped the poet at all. Neither his death, nor the centennial celebrations, nor the establishment of Tagore chairs has produced the smallest sign of a literary revival. The image of the public man remains; it is being lauded and magnified, but the poet is scarcely noticed outside his native Bengal. Tagore's poems, said Mr. Stephen Spender in Calcutta, 'are not written in an English which the English themselves particularly appreciate, because it seems too vague and misty and spiritual for the taste of a people brought up on enormous hunks of mutton and beef. But, still, his poems exist in their own right and they are contributions to the English language.'²⁷ This is only a polite way of dismissing Tagore as a poet, insofar as he is available in English, for the question is whether or not Tagore contributed—not to the *English*

language, which does not really apply—but to world-poetry, where many Bengalis believe he belongs. Still more revealing is Robert Frost's centennial oration in New York,* which is much more Frost than Tagore, and in which the great American poet does not really get beyond saying that 'it's fine to hear he's [Tagore] still a living force in India.'²⁸ If further proof is needed, it is easily available in *Rabindranath Tagore: A Centenary Volume* (Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1961), a sumptuous offering with contributors from many nations. In it, too, the writer is almost obscured by the great man; for of its 444 text-pages a bare one hundred is covered by actual comments on Tagore's writings. That the authors of these comments are mostly Bengalis may cause no surprise, but it is hardly compatible with the claim, made by Pearl Buck on p. 119, that Tagore is a 'world-poet'. And the most curious (or shall we say ironical) thing is that there is not a single article dealing specifically and critically with Tagore's *poetry*.†

It must be noted, however, that Tagore, although he permitted translations utterly unworthy of his signature to appear in print, did not err in his valuation of them. 'In my translations,' he confessed to a friend in 1921,²⁹ 'I timidly avoided all difficulties, which has the effect of making them thin.... When I began this career of falsifying my own coins I did it in play. Now I am becoming frightened of its enormity and am willing to ... withdraw into my original vocation as a mere Bengali poet. I hope it is not yet too late to make a reparation.' And again: 'I become acutely conscious of the cracks and gaps in my translations and try to cover them up with some pretty designs that may give them an appearance of wholeness.

* Written before Frost's death.

† I use the word 'critically' in its innocuous sense of belonging to the category of literary criticism. As an example of the *non-critical* remark, let me again quote Robert Frost: 'Fortunately Tagore's poetry overflowed national boundaries to reach us in his own English. He belongs little less to us than to his own country.' (*Rabindranath Tagore: A Centenary Volume*, p. 298) 'Us' obviously means Americans, and this is a heart-warming message to India from the grand old man of American letters; but this can have meaning only in the sense that the Scandinavian sagas belong as much to India as to Scandinavia, although not more one in a hundred educated Indians may have heard that they exist. It is in this ideal sense that we must also take the words of Dr. Schweitzer (p. 297 of the same volume), that Tagore, 'the Goethe of India ... belongs not only to his people but to humanity,' as an expression of good will which bears no relation to the objective situation. Incidentally, one of the adjectives used by Dr. Schweitzer of Tagore is 'charming.' One wonders whether he would have used this of Goethe.

He regretted I should never have handled your language.'³⁰ 'I hope I am too late to make a reparation': the words make melancholy reading today, for the 'falsified coins' are still in circulation and are the reason why, on hearing a Bengali assert that Tagore is a great poet, his friends acceptable to poetry raise their eyebrows.

VII

Nevertheless, the best of Tagore's translations are still the best available, for although new ones have appeared recently, and some are interesting, all (or but all) of them are the work of Indians who have Tagore's natural handicap but not his natural and circumstantial advantages. 'Tagore does not know English,' wrote Yeats in exasperation, 'no Indian knows English. Nobody can write with music and style in a language not learned in childhood and ever since the language of his thought.'³¹ This is a cold douche for our 'Indo-Anglian' poets, but Tagore would have been the first to agree with the latter part of the statement, which is a plain home truth and needs to be uttered only with reference to us unfortunate Indians. Of course the reverse is not true, for of the millions born to a language, only a few become real writers. An enthusiastic Scotsman, with some knowledge of Bengali and Bengal, has rendered some Tagore songs in rhymed verse, setting them to the original music, but I feel that lines like 'Over the world, Thy music shines, on hi-gh;/Breathing life, Thy music fills the whole sk-y' are intended to be appreciated when sung to tune and not as verse in cold print.³² Readers interested in the *poem* will still have to go to Tagore's version.

It follows that though selected pieces from *Gitanjali* are still the best of Tagore in English, they are not, and *could not* have been, really adequate. And even if *The Gardener* and *Lover's Gift* and *Crowing* had generally the quality of *Gitanjali*, it is doubtful whether the poet would have fared any better. Actually, his decline in the West was as rapid as his success was sudden, for which there is a very good historical reason. It happened that when Tagore turned to English, English poetry had sunk to mere verbal felicity, and a poetic revolution was imminent. Men like Yeats and Pound were turning away from the delicacy which marks Tagore's English; it was no mere coincidence that Bridges and Masefield went out of vogue at the same time as the poet of *Gitanjali*. Today it is all too plain that

Tagore's Edwardian diction is against him; his *thees* and *thous* are against him; the sameness of his prose is against him; the apparent sameness of theme and tone is against him. It is true that in essentials of thought and feeling Tagore remained the same from youth to old age, but in Bengali this is compensated by an extraordinary variety and liveliness of diction and poetic form. Stripped of all formal and technical variety, without a vestige of the craftsmanship of the originals, the English versions can be valued only for the substance, and this becomes increasingly thin in the *Collected Poems and Plays*.^{*33}

As one who believes that literature is a universal art and translations give it this universality, I must now plead for new translations from Tagore. When Dryden said that any translation was good only for the generation during which it was made, he was only stating a general law, for not taste only, but language itself changes from one generation to another, and a translation can be enjoyable only when it reads like a contemporary work. It is clear that Dryden's words have borne rich fruit in our time, for bookshelves on both sides of the Atlantic are crammed with new English translations not only from Greek, Latin, French and German, but also Chinese and Japanese. Will not some British or American writer be inspired to do for Tagore what Campbell, Leishman, Hamburger, MacIntyre and others have done for the French and German poets, and Keene, Rexroth and Robert Payne, succeeding Waley and Poulid, for Sino-Japanese literature? Until this happens, Tagore to the world will remain a mere name, pale and insubstantial, at best a frozen image, like some Hindu idol. Needless to add, it will not be enough for the hypotheti-

* Any one interested in this question should read *Rabindranath Tagore: His Life and Work*, by E. J. (same as Edward) Thompson, pp. 45-51. Here Thompson says that Tagore's 'real reputation began to decline, almost as soon as it reached its height,' which 'distressing thing' he attributes to 'very grave mistakes' made by 'the poet and his publishers.' Because '*Gitanjali* was a selling proposition . . . book after book was hurried out, almost fortuitously,' until, with the publication of *The Crescent Moon* and *Sadhana*, Tagore's 'fate was sealed.' Thompson further notes that in translating Tagore either 'avoided his boldest, strongest poems, or watered them down to prettiness' and 'perhaps not one of the greater poems that he has translated is not badly truncated.' Moreover, seemingly 'infected by his false fame in the West,' Tagore 'took to inserting in his English "translations" pretty-pretty nonsense that was not in the originals at all.' No one who has read Tagore in both Bengali and English can help agreeing with these remarks of Thompson, who, incidentally, made an honest attempt to understand and interpret Tagore's writings, and whose admiration for the poet and the man was steady and genuine. In fact, Thompson remains to this day Tagore's most distinguished, if not only Western critic, in the proper sense of the word.

Translator to be naturally English-speaking; he will have to be a poet himself and acquire a feeling for Tagore and Bengali poetry. It will be necessary to translate in verse, and in the contemporary idiom. Rhyme, rhyme-schemes and stanza-forms, assonances and alliterations will have to be reproduced or imitated, as far as possible. Equivalents will have to be found for Bengali modes of expression and content in English.* The difficulties of the task will be great and manifold, arising out of the distance separating the two languages and the peculiarities of the originals. Tagore is like Hugo in his use of bold and imprecise metaphors, and like Verlaine in his power of creating a poem out of almost nothing, simply by a combination of evocative and euphonious words. Another obstacle to translating Tagore is pointed out by Sudhindranath Datta, the Bengali poet and critic, who observed that Tagore, even when arguing, 'would not submit to the compulsion of reason if telling similes were at hand.'³⁴ This perpetual use of metaphors makes his prose particularly unwieldy for the translator; and in verse, too, he is capable of a lyricism so pure that an objective or logical framework becomes unnecessary. But to say that his best poems are 'untranslatable' is a form of escapism, and no one has the right to say so until talent and patient toil have done their best by them. Nor should we forget how much the world would have lost if difficulties were not also a challenge, alluring to the adventurous. And the world, by not having access to Tagore's poetry, remains to that extent the poorer; the conception of world literature is incomplete without him. Perhaps some American university will initiate a project to fill this gap, some day. Tagore and the world deserve this enterprise.

* As an example of this, let me cite the word, 'touch.' *Sparsha* or *parash* in Bengali is a far ampler word than its English equivalent; it quite usually connotes spiritual influence or exhalation. Thus, 'a touch of the heart' (or of love or music or any other abstraction) is perfect Bengali idiom, but such phrases do not usually go in English. In Tagore, however, 'touch' is a rather overworked word. The following quotations are from *Gitanjali*. (The figure within brackets indicates the number of the poem.)

Honour it with a touch of pain (6); the touch of the one in the play of the many (63); the innermost one, who awakens my being with his deep hidden touches (72); O my sun ever-glorious! Thy touch has not yet melted my vapour (80); that lost sweet touch in the allness of the universe (87); my whole body and my limbs have thrilled with his touch who is beyond touch.

¹ *The Post Office* was translated by Debabrata Mukherji, and parts of *The Cycle of Spring* by C. F. Andrews and Nishikanta Sen.

² This seems all the more odd when we recall that the separate volumes were announced as translations.

³ The only exception to this was the prose-poem, *The Child* (George Allen & Unwin, London, 1931), which Tagore wrote directly in English and later translated into Bengali.

⁴ *Bulletin of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture*, Calcutta, vol. XII, no. 11, p. 383.

⁵ *Desh*, Calcutta, January 21, 1961, p. 906.

⁶ *A Tagore Reader* (Macmillan, New York, 1961) is announced as belonging to 'the Indian Translation Series' of the Unesco Collection of Representative Works; and the fact is made clear in the Introduction by Dr. Amiya Chakravarty, the editor.

⁷ *Rabindranath Tagore: His Life and Work*, The Heritage of India series, Association Press, Calcutta, and Oxford University Press, London, 1921; and *Rabindranath Tagore: Poet and Dramatist*, Oxford University Press, London, revised 2nd edn., 1948.

⁸ For Tagore's views on the Eliot school, see his essay on 'Modern Poetry' in *A Tagore Reader* (pp. 241-253). The original appeared in 1932.

⁹ Hindu College, established in Calcutta in 1816, was India's first centre of 'Western' education. Inspired by Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-1831), an Indo-Portuguese teacher of meteoric brilliance, some students lost their heads over English customs and literature. A typical product was Michael Madhusudan Datta (1824-73), the first modern poet of Bengal, who embraced Christianity, 'spoke, thought and dreamt in English,' and in his youth reeled off English verse in the Byronic manner. However, he could become a poet only in his native Bengali and when using Hindu themes.

Tagore in his boyhood was educated mostly at home, and Bengali had the natural place of honour in the Tagore household.

¹⁰ *Chhipipatra*, vol. 5, Rabindranath Thakur, Visva-Bharati, Calcutta, 1945. Letter No. 1 to Srimati Indira Devi Chaudhurani. ('Tagore' is an Anglicised form of the surname.)

¹¹ Conversation.

¹² *Rabindranath Tagore: Poet and Dramatist*, Edward Thompson, 2nd edn., p. 222.

¹³ *Tagore: A Life*, Krishna Kripalani, Malancha, New Delhi, 1961, p. 115.

¹⁴⁻¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

¹⁶ Quoted by Ezra Pound in his article, 'Rabindranath Tagore,' *Fortnightly Review*, London, March 1, 1913, and reprinted in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, Santiniketan, Tagore Birthday Number, May-October, 1941, p. 293.

¹⁷ *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, Tagore Birthday Number, p. 296.

¹⁸ *Tagore: A Life*, Krishna Kripalani, p. 122.

¹⁹ *An Acre of Green Grass: A Review of Modern Bengali Literature*, Buddha-deva Bose, Orient Longmans, Calcutta, 1948.

²⁰ He exercised a similar freedom in his *One Hundred Poems of Kabir*.

²¹ *Rabindranath Tagore: Poet and Dramatist*, 2nd edn., p. 222.

²² The English *Gitanjali* does not correspond to the Bengali volume with the same title. Tagore selected his pieces from ten different works, chiefly *Gitāñjali*,

of *Gitāñjali* and *Kheyā*, among which *Gitāñjali* was the latest, and the preparation. Of the one hundred and three poems, fifty-one are in *Gitāñjali*.

See *Rabindranath Tagore : Poet and Dramatist*, 2nd edn., p. 236.

See his letter to Harriet Monroe, quoted by Stephen Hay in his article, 'Tagore in America', published in a Bengali translation in *Desh*, Rabindra Chandra, May 5, 1962, p. 61.

See *Letters of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Allan Wade, Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1930, p. 304.

See *Rabindranath Tagore : His Life and Works*, p. 49.

Journal of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, vol. XII, 1961, pp. 303-304.

Given on April 19, 1961, at Town Hall, New York, and printed from a typesetting in *Poetry* for November, 1961, pp. 106-119.

See Edward Thompson. See his *Rabindranath Tagore : Poet and Dramatist*, 2nd edn., p. 264.

See *The Letters of W. B. Yeats*, p. 834.

See *Stanzas by Rabindranath Tagore*, translated, at his wish, by Arthur Geddes. Printed at The Darien Press Ltd., Edinburgh. No date or publisher mentioned.

"Thompson closely compared the translations and the originals, but the check-list he gives in *Rabindranath Tagore : Poet and Dramatist*, 2nd edn. does not quite cover the books—owing to the poet's freedom in translating, sources are elusive." (Appendix B, p. 317)

"Tagore as a Lyric Poet", Sudhindranath Datta, *Quest*, Calcutta, Special Issue (Tagore and his Land), May, 1961, pp. 18-26. I quote the whole sentence to acknowledge a debt and to show how my views coincide with this writer's: 'In visual imagination, Tagore resembled Victor Hugo: both could create palpable poems almost out of nothing; and even when they argued, neither would submit to the compulsion of reason if telling similes were at hand.'

W. B. YEATS AND INDIA

THE STORY OF A RELATIONSHIP TILL THE ADVENT OF TAGORE IN THE WEST

NARESH GUHA

I

1885-1890: Early Impact of Eastern Ideas

W. B. YEATS'S early interest in the occult, in magic, and in Eastern mysticism was as much encouraged by the general environment in Dublin of the eighties of the last century as by his complicated relationship with his father, John Butler Yeats. The relationship was complicated because he was both attracted and repelled by the ideas and ideals held by his father. Richard Ellmann has analysed this father-and-son relationship and its curious effect on the poet's further development.¹ Yeats's position, as this critic has shown, was somewhat that of a counter-revolutionary considering the fact that his father himself had revolted against the standard values of the nineteenth century. Yeats learned to share his father's pride, even arrogance, in being an artist. He also developed, like his father, (a passion for nationalism as well as a conviction that poetic belief was far superior to any religious belief, and that poetry having an exalted position above religion had nothing to do with the speculative interest common in Victorian poetry.) But he shrank somewhat from one thing in John Butler Yeats—his scepticism.

Yeats was religious by instinct. The childhood image of his God was, of course, of a harsh moral being, strong of will and strong of power who, like his grandfather William Pollexfen, perhaps "kept a hachet at his bedside," and punished people for misbehaviour.² But all the same He was there. From a fear of this almighty God arose much of the remorsefulness of his childhood! This religious instinct had also the support of his mother from whom, again, he first learned the strange stories, current in the Sligo area, of Irish fairies, banshees, and disembodied spirits. These stories were supplemented by the accounts repeated by the servants at his grandfather's home. His uncle George Pollexfen, who later became an astrologer,

ing the soul his dear friend, had a servant with second sight and a mind crammed with all sorts of history and strange belief. Much of *The Celtic Twilight* is nothing but a record of the stories she told to young Yeats. Apart from the abiding influence on him of these tales, young Yeats himself was psychic to some extent, and supposed-occult experiences were not uncommon in his life. He records, for example, to have seen inexplicable lights and bursts of fire at Rathfarnham in places where no human beings could possibly be.

But Yeats, who had become an uncompromising sceptic from time under the influence of Mill at Trinity College, could hardly tolerate his son's interest in spirits and visions. The son also was not completely free from sceptical doubts which arose from his schoolboy interest in natural history and the theory of evolution. If then W. B. fanatically stuck to the occult ideas discredited by science as superstitions of ignorant minds, it was probably because of the natural urge to establish his identity as quite distinct from his father's. All his life he assiduously cultivated this "secret fanaticism" though never quite succeeded in escaping from our modern doubt.

His interest in natural history, which preceded his pursuit of the occult, had developed while at school in England, between 1875 and 1880. There at the Godolphin School in Hammersmith he had begun collecting moths and butterflies with the enthusiasm of a young scientist, and used to keep an old tailless white rat in his coat pocket or in his desk. His pursuit of collecting botanical and zoological specimens vigorously continued even after 1880 when the family came back to Ireland. At one time he even considered writing a study of the changes occurring through the year among the creatures living in a rock-hole near Howth where the family had settled.⁸ He had discovered the writings of Darwin and Wallace, Huxley and Haeckel, and decided to be "hot for argument in refutation of Adam and Eve and the Seven Days," the fardel of stories of creation in the Bible. As a student at Erasmus High School in Dublin he was "infatuated of the Descent of Man," and tried to start a natural history society. The first literary essay that won him fame was on evolutionary botany.⁹ Even the not-very-conventional class teacher considered the essay heretical. For weeks after the essay was handed in, the classroom was "full of suppressed lightning." The master dared not let the subject be debated in class. The essay was suppressed, but not Yeats, and so "the flashes crackled every now and then among the

elements of Euclid." Yeats's performance caused real pain and grief to at least one of his classmates, who was a devoted literalist, and for whom all spiritual life depended on the six days of Genesis. In those days, even while taking a walk in the countryside, Yeats's conversation with his classmates almost always turned to the theory of evolution. The whole of the *Origin of the Species*, he insisted, could be proved by a minute examination of a simple daisy. Naturally, his classmates regarded him with some awe and respect and were proud to be seen walking with him.

While on the one hand he thus tried to confound his comrades with his knowledge of the latest development in science, he secretly on the other hand carried within himself a loneliness, a melancholy love of reverie, and a fascination for the world of fairies and spirits, his "secret fanaticism".

Shelley's heroes had become his ideals by this time, particularly because some of them were described as having magical wisdom, thus setting them apart from the general herd of mankind, a dream he shared with them. Among these heroes he had chosen Alastor for his chief of men, longed to share his melancholy and "maybe at last to disappear from everybody's sight as he disappeared drifting in a boat along some slow-moving river between great trees."⁵

The conflict between magical wisdom and scientific knowledge did not, however, persist for long. Enthusiasm for science gradually waned, and he became more and more convinced that his sole desire always had been to be certain of his own wisdom. Solomon's thirst for the knowledge of "hyssop and the tree," he thought, was not different from his own early interest in the biological science, the aim in both cases being to acquire wisdom!⁶ He still carried his green net, but it was no more than a habit, and he began to "play at being a sage, a magician or poet." Wisdom, magical or otherwise, was the one thing that occupied his mind, and, having conquered bodily desire and the inclination of his mind toward women and love, he wanted to live the life of an ascetic seeking enlightenment.⁷ Thus it seems that even before he left high school he was preparing himself for the assertion of intellectual freedom from his father.

He left high school at the end of 1883, and against the family tradition of the last three generations refused to go to Trinity College. J. B. Yeats was not very unhappy at this decision. Expecting to

make his son a painter like himself, he gladly sent him to the Metropolitan School of Art on Kildare Street, Dublin. Yeats did not stay there long as he really did not have any talent for painting, but he met there a fellow classmate whose influence on him was to prove of far-reaching consequence. This classmate was George Russell, better known as AE, the poet and mystic. The servant of the Yeats family had an awesome respect for him and referred to him as a "strayed angel." Young Russell, who, incidentally, was two years younger than Yeats, had begun to be overpowered by an intense and passionate imagination or vision of another world, of an interior nature long before he came to know theosophy.⁸ He was very much unlike his fellow-students at the art school who knew little of philosophy or literature, and unlike them he painted from his private visions and not from living models at all. Mysticism had a great hold on him and he had begun to read whatever mystical books were available. The famous fifty-volume series of *The Sacred Books of the East*, under the editorship of Max Müller, was being published at the time. The *Buddhist Sutras* came out in 1881, the *Bhagavad-Gītā* in 1882, and the volume with the *Upaniṣads* could be had in 1884. Russell read them all, and read little else but Eastern literature for years, as he wrote to Clifford Bax in a letter on July 4, 1905.⁹ The result was that he was never able really to enjoy thereafter the literature of Europe where romance and beauty and love are not "trapt up into eternal things" as in Eastern mystical poetry. Temperamentally he was more suited to Eastern spiritual writings like the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and the *Upaniṣads* and found the sacred books of Judea very much less interesting.¹⁰ He also had begun to read theosophical literature such as Mabel Collins Cook's *Light on the Path*, a treatise written for those who desired to absorb Eastern wisdom. Miss Cook became the co-editor, with Madame Blavatsky, of the theosophical journal *Lucifer*, and was finally expelled from the Society in 1889, together with the president of the London Lodge of the Theosophical Society, "for flirtation," as Yeats reported in 1889 with unconcealed amusement to Katharine Tynan.¹¹ However, when Yeats was at the art school in Dublin, Miss Cook's book was being seriously studied by the inner circle of Dublin young men. Yeats remembers in his autobiography that AE had lent this little theosophical book to a "strange and pious student [at the art school] who used to come sometimes with a daisy chain round his neck."¹²

George Russell, it seems therefore, was well read in Eastern philosophy and literature, and he certainly did not have to wait for theosophy for a dubious introduction to Indian metaphysics. He was also practising Eastern meditation to affirm that "we are what we imagine." It is probable that Yeats's early interest in India was roused by the example of his friend, though in Dublin of 1884-85 Russell was not the only young man who had become interested in Eastern philosophy and esoteric doctrines. There were also Charles Weekes, Claude Wright, and Yeats's classmate Charles Johnston who was planning to be a Christian missionary but ended as a theosophist. At the end of 1884 and the beginning of 1885 came their "Oriental epoch" when these young pioneers "saturated" themselves in the wisdom of India.¹³ Finally, in 1885, they formed the Dublin Hermetic Society to study European magic, mysticism, and Eastern religion. Yeats played a prominent part in the organization. As a matter of fact he and Charles Johnston were the initiators in the formation of the Society.¹⁴ Together they studied Baron Reichenbach on Odic Force and, later, the manuals published by the Theosophical Society. They spent a good deal of time in the Kildare Street Museum passing their hands over the glass cases, feeling or believing they felt "the Odic Force flowing from the big crystals."¹⁵

The Dublin Hermetic Society met for the first time on June 16, 1885, with Yeats as chairman.¹⁶ The purpose was to discuss the wonders of Eastern philosophy. Several papers were read on such serious topics as recent occult phenomena, on whether the Mahātmās of the theosophists really existed, and if so what their powers might be. Yeats's opening address to this meeting of the Dublin Hermetic Society shows that he already was repeating the familiar theosophical arguments concerning Science and Reality. Neither science nor theology could explain, he told the assembled members, spiritualistic phenomena. The mystery could be known, as he suggested, only by following the maze of Eastern thought. And he solemnly warned the audience that love of abstraction might frustrate any such attempt.

Yeats thus became a prominent member of the Dublin band of young philosophers but with a significant difference from them. Either because of his father's influence or because of his early fanaticism with science and the theory of evolution, his scepticism persisted, though hardly anybody could notice its existence. More-

over, there is nothing to suggest that, like George Russell, he was very much concerned about finding the ultimate "truth" of life. He pursued mystical studies initially because he wanted to break away from his sceptical father's intellectual domination. This negative attitude is not, of course, the whole explanation of his lifelong interest. What was perhaps an initial reaction to his father's scepticism gradually became a preoccupation with him; the private system that emerged after years of unconventional study and experimentation immensely helped him not as a seeker after truth but as a creative writer.

Once he had given up the art school and decided that he would become a poet instead, he did nothing that did not in some direct or indirect way contribute to his poetic ambition. Others had their souls to save, he had his poetry. His association with the Theosophical Society should be understood from this perspective. It was he who had lent A. P. Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism* (1883) to his class-mate Charles Johnston, which incident really started the Dublin movement of the Theosophical Society, but when the society was finally established he remained aloof and unattached. AE also refused to join all at once. But despite this superficial similarity, there is a great deal of difference between these two men. AE had already been studying the sacred texts of India and, being of ascetic temperament, was not sure that the theosophists had set more than black magic as their goal. This must have been the reason that he protested to Madame Blavatsky against the Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society of London. But later when he joined the Society he remained its loyal campaigner till the end of his life.¹⁷ Yeats, on the other hand, was more interested in occult experiments than in ascetic ideals. When the occult experiments proved fruitless he left, and that was the end of his association with the Society.

Yeats most probably had his introduction to Indian traditional thinking through AE, as I have already mentioned, but there is nothing to prove that he accepted AE's approach to that ancient tradition. The poems he wrote during the early days of theosophy in Dublin indicate that he did not. If his association with the Dublin theosophists is memorable, it is for one thing—his encounter with Mohini Chatterjee.

Mohini Chatterjee came from London in 1885 as a special emissary from Madame Blavatsky and spent a few days in Dublin with the young enthusiasts. He was a Vedāntist, and Yeats's first encounter

with this handsome, young, persuasive Bengali Brahmin has been made famous by his poem "Mohini Chatterjee". With the passing of years Mohini Chatterjee became a symbol for Yeats of the Indian abstract thinking which he himself came to reject, but the experience of his first meeting with him was overwhelming. He wrote a long account of Mohini's visit, then cut it short calling it "The Pathway", and included it in the eighth volume of his first *Collected Works* (1908). The essay has never since been reprinted. The Brahmin taught the young Irish philosophers by what seemed an invincible logic that "those who die, insofar as they imagined beauty or justice, are made part of that beauty or justice and move the minds of living men, as Shelley believed; and that mind overshadows mind even among the living and by pathways that lie beyond the senses; and that he measured labour by this measure and put the hermit above all other labourers, because being the most silent and most hidden, he lived nearer to the Eternal powers, and showed their mastery of the world."¹⁸ The youthful seekers of Dublin, seeking for some unknown deed or thought, were tremendously impressed by the words of this man "who threw the enchantment of power about silent and gentle things." They dreamed that the one thing worth doing and thinking was to listen to his magical words and to think as he thought: "that all action and words that lead to action were a little vulgar, a little trivial."¹⁹

Some of the early poems written between 1884 and 1887 are conclusive evidence of his preoccupation with Indian themes and conceptions at the very beginning of his poetic career. Poems written on specifically Indian themes are not many. The *Dublin University Review* published two in 1886, one with a long title—"From the Book of Kauri the Indian—/ Section V. On the Nature of God,"²⁰ and the other called simply "An Indian Song".²¹ Both of these poems later underwent drastic revisions, particularly the second one, which is now called "The Indian to His Love". His first book of verse, *The Wanderings of Oisín and Other Poems* (1889), contained two other "Indian" poems: "Kanva on Himself"²² (1885?) which is the first version of "Mohini Chatterjee" (1928), and "Jealousy"²³ (1887), of which the title was later changed to "Anashuya and Vijaya". He also wrote two short sections in "Quatrains and Aphorisms"²⁴ (1886) which are specifically on India, but never included them in any of his volumes of poetry. Some of the other

poems written at about this time are not specifically on Indian themes, but the name of India occurs in the text, and the context is always characteristic of Yeats's special interest. The general theme of "The Seeker" and "Mosada", for example, is a magical, supersensuous power which can control the world. The Old Knight of "The Seeker" (1885) is said to have spent in search of wisdom three score years of dream-led wanderings in eastern lands

Where spice-isles nestle on the star-trod seas,
And where the polar winds and waters wrestle
In endless dark, and *by the weedy marge*
Of India's rivers, rolling on in light ...

(my italics)

and he has wandered seeking "joys unhuman" that can only be conquered "through miseries unhuman." The visionary one whose call had made him leave his home and heroic pursuit of life turns out ultimately to be "a bearded witch, her sluggish head bent low on her broad breast." Heartbroken, the Knight dies, but the unforgettable voice rings in his ears till the end. I want to connect this early poem of Yeats with his first Noh play, *At the Hawk's Well*, written about thirty years later. There also an old man spends fifty fruitless years waiting for the water of the well of immortality to bubble up, and the play ends with the bitterness of frustration. From this perspective it can be seen that Yeats did not take much time to reject the Indian ideal of enlightenment through the asceticism that Mohini Chatterjee talked about. In "The Seeker", written in the same year that the Brahmin visited Dublin, the Knight's heroic heart is said to have been stolen by a dream and a "peering hare's" heart was substituted instead. Distant echoes of Mohini Chatterjee's admonition could be heard in the Knight's sad monologue: "all action and words that lead to action were a little vulgar, a little trivial." I tend to read Yeats's metaphorical comment on this ideal in the words of the dying Knight:

For all I gave the voice, for all my youth,
For all my joy—ah, woe!

Much later Yeats suggested in his introduction to Purohit Swami's *The Aphorisms of Yoga* that the subsequent love of abstractions in

India had ended her earlier heroic age.²⁵ In this early poem the Knight, however, is not completely disillusioned. His last words are: "Again, the voice! the voice!" This is the imperfectly formulated beginning of that vacillation he wrote about much later in life—a vacillation between the heroic ideal and the ideal of the saint or ascetic.²⁶

The name of India occurs again in "Mosada" (1886) where the Moorish girl uses the power of incantation to know the whereabouts of her beloved and cries out ecstatically that when the phantoms gather round her beckoning arms, she will sing

the songs the dusky lovers sing
Wandering in sultry palaces of Ind,
A lotus in their hands—

Thus even to the early Yeats India was a country of magic, of enchantment, of the power of the mind that controls nature. But the India with her ideal of renunciation or of achieving perfection through asceticism never attracted him. The dream of absolute perfection persisted for a long time, and it took him years to awake from that dream. But he did not have any uncritical abandon for this dream perfection even in such an early poem as "The Island of Statues", which belongs to his "Oriental epoch", and has for its theme the thirst for abstract perfection of joy. The lovers of Naschina give their lives seeking for her "the golden flower of joy" from a great enchantress who lives on a small green island across the gray waters. The woman would not be satisfied without that unearthly flower which alone could dispel Fear that dwells ever in the human breast. The flower is won at last in the poem, but no one is sure that it was worth the trouble, because with the coming of victory Naschina is transformed into nothingness and so can never return her lover's love. At the end of the drama the rising moon casts the shadows of the victorious Almintor and the sleepers far across the grass. But close by Almintor's side, Naschina stands shadowless.

Yeats's Indian poems are interesting for several reasons. It would not be fruitless to speculate why the poem "Jealousy", an unfinished poem, was retained in his subsequent editions, while "Kanva on Himself" was suppressed after its initial publication in the 1889 volume of *The Wanderings of Oisín and Other Poems*. This latter poem

summarizes the teaching of Mohini Chatterjee. We are told that we bear in our bodies the garnered rust of ancient passions and ancient fears, and therefore need not fear the usury of "Time" or the coming of "Death", for the simple reason that "as things were so shall things be." Yeats suppressed the poem not because the idea of reincarnation had ceased to be meaningful to him. He continued to use the idea till the end of his life. He suppressed the poem because of the calm and complacent acceptance of fate that it suggested. This quiet monologue of 1885 has been transformed into a vital dialogue in "Mohini Chatterjee" (1928). Reincarnation is still considered necessary, not because that is the law of nature, but because one earthly life is not sufficient for the fulfilment of all our desires, and until these desires are fulfilled there is no release. The poet's "commentary" in the revised version does not recommend the suppression of desire, which a Vedāntist would do, and that makes a world of difference.

The sections on Indian conceptions in his "Quatrains and Aphorisms" were never published for the same reason. Here are the poems:

III

Long thou for nothing, neither sad nor gay;
 Long thou for nothing, neither night nor day;
 Not even "I long to see thy longing over,"
 To the ever-longing and mournful spirit say.

IV

The ghosts went by me with their lips apart
 From death's late languor as these lines I read
 On Brahma's gateway, "They within have fed
 The soul upon the ashes of the heart."²⁷

They tell of quiet acceptance or renunciation. Yeats did not publish these sections in *The Dublin University Review* where the other sections were printed in January and February of 1886, and there he did not call them "aphorisms" either, but gave them a general title, "In a Drawing Room". Perhaps he was aware that Dublin intellectuals like Dowden would never approve of Brahma and aphorisms with their obvious Hindu connotations.²⁸ The name "aphorisms" suggests, however, that Yeats was already acquainted with the *Aphorisms of Yoga* in some form,

The original title of the poem "The Indian upon God" may suggest that at one time he thought of writing a whole sequence of poems to be called "The Book of Kauri the Indian", of which "On the Nature of God" was to constitute section V. The conception of God in this poem conforms more to the early Vedic conception than to anything else in later Hinduism which developed from it. The *Rg-veda* represents a comparatively exalted form of a faith based on nature worship.²⁹ The poet-sages of the *Rg-veda* deified not only the things and phenomena of nature but also men and even animals, not to worship but to encompass them in a mythological relationship. Yeats's poem is interesting as it suggests his acquaintance with the *Rg-veda* as early as 1886 when the poem was written. Yeats obviously connected this conception with the ancient Irish conception of deification that "there is one among the birds that is perfect, and one perfect among the fish."³⁰ His acquaintance with the *Rg-veda* is also suggested in the poem "Jealousy" ("Anashuya and Vijaya") where the conception of God is Vedic rather than Vedāntic. The name of Anashuya, as also of Kaṇva in the previous poem, might seem to have come from Kālidāsa's *Śakuntalā*, the well known classical Sanskrit drama which Yeats evidently read at that time. Upon the publication of *The Wanderings of Oisín and Other Poems*, a reviewer asked if the poet was right in saying that a peahen danced. Yeats wrote to O'Leary that the reviewer was entirely wrong as peahens "dance throughout the whole of Indian poetry," and that he could find many such dancing if he had Kālidāsa by him. With the peahens of the poultry yards he had, of course, no concern, he wrote, but "the wild peahen dances or all Indian poets lie."³¹ In spite of this evidence of his knowledge of Kālidāsa, one cannot say that he borrowed from that Sanskrit poet more than the two names. Kaṇva in Kālidāsa is no more than the affectionate and understanding foster father of *Śakuntalā*. Since the name of Kaṇva appears also in the early draft of his poem on Mohini Chatterjee, and since Kaṇva is the name of a great sage to whom the whole Book VIII of the *Rg-veda* is ascribed, it seems more likely that Yeats's Kaṇva is from the Vedic text.³²

The theme of "Jealousy" was explained by Yeats himself in a note to the *Poems*³³ (1895) where he writes that the little Indian dramatic scene "was meant to be the first scene of a play about a man loved by two women, who had one soul between them, one

woman waking when the other slept, and knowing by daylight as the other only by night." This is a slight modification of the conception of the higher and lower selves in us, as explained in the *Mundaka* Upaniṣad, where it is put in terms of the famous image of two mythical birds sitting on the same branch of a tree. One of the birds eats the fruit, the other watches silently. One participates in action and in its turn is affected by the results of action; the other remains detached and unaffected. Anashuya in the poem represents the night part, the lower self, while Amrita is the eternal, unmoved, daylight part of the soul, the higher self, the bird that watches and never participates in action. Anashuya has normal desires, passion, hatred, anger, and she loves the earth with its flickering corn and flamingoes. She uses incantations, like those in the Vedas, to bring peace and prosperity to the land, to the merry lambs and complacent kine and to secure for herself the love of Vijaya. She loves as a woman loves, while Amrita's love is that of a mother. Vijaya vacillates between the pull of the two women, the two halves of his soul. He remembers that Anashuya, the earthly self, can only bring sorrows and changes in life where

Their faces are all worn, and in their eyes
Flashes the fire of sadness, for they see
The icicles that famish all the North,
Where men lie frozen in the glimmering snow;
And in the flaming forests cower the lion
And lioness, with all their whimpering cubs;
And, ever pacing on the verge of things,
The phantom, Beauty, in a mist of tears;³⁴

while Amrita, the higher self, can bring eternal peace and security. Anashuya prays to the secondary god Brahmā, while Vijaya sings to her (or him?) whom even Brahmā praises. Yeats did not complete the projected play but he kept this unfinished portion as a part of his *Collected Poems*—the only unfinished poem in that volume—probably because the vacillation of Vijaya represented his own vacillation between the two extremes of life. I suggest that Vijaya really stands on the "crossways", one way leading to an abstract perfection beyond life, the other to a "profane perfection" attainable within life. What happened when the dream of absolute perfection occupied the mind can be seen in a later drama, *Where There is Nothing*

(1903). Vijaya with his heart turned toward Amrita, which literally means Eternity or Immortality, is the visionary Paul Ruttledge. Everything comes back, round and round, in Yeats's poetic world. This is true not only of the last phase of his life when he was recapitulating the images, characters and situations that he had created in his life. His *Collected Poems* can be read as a book having a strange organic unity with innumerable cross references scattered throughout.

These early poems indicate more certainly the reason why Yeats did not join the Dublin group of the theosophists though he was, in a way, responsible for starting the movement. As a poet he had nothing to learn from contemporaries like AE who had seriously taken to the Indian ideal of asceticism and renunciation coming from Vedānta. AE was not even sure that he wanted to be an artist. He soon laid aside his brushes, and determined not to pick them up again until he had mastered the besetting temptation that art presented. After all, is not art a kind of self-indulgence? Only one thing interested him, we are told, and that was "life or truth." He wanted to "become" rather than to know.³⁵ The result was that his poetry suffered a great deal and became full of vague abstractions. In an early appreciation of his visionary friend Yeats shrewdly pointed out that his poems were all "endeavours to capture some high, impalpable mood in the net of obscure images."³⁶ His occasional fine passages were embedded in thoughts which, though they had a special value to his mind, were only "counters of an unknown coinage" to others. And his careless writing might suggest that the writer himself "had suddenly doubted if writing was not a foolish labour." If this was what theosophy did to a talented artist, Yeats instinctively avoided its contamination.

But when he moved to London in 1887 with his family, Yeats was at once captivated by the personality of the much maligned "Russian cat," Madame Blavatsky, the founder herself of the Theosophical Society. She had already been "exposed" by the Hodgson Report of the Society for Psychical Research. But not being a "frivolous penitent" in search of salvation, Yeats was hardly perturbed by the disrepute she was in. He read her two-volume work, *Isis Unveiled*, a not quite organized "fardel" of stories, myths and legends of the world, became an initiate, and began to visit her regularly. She was not, after all, a follower of Vedānta. In her books, the dream of perfection has a prominent place, but it is expressed in

terms of symbols taken mainly from the *Purāṇic* or mythological Hinduism.

The connection of the Theosophical Society with India is interesting. The Society was founded by Madame Blavatsky (known as H.P.B. to her followers), Colonel W. S. Olcott, and W. Q. Judge in the autumn of 1875 in New York City. When, even after the publication in 1887 of the two volumes of *Isis Unveiled*, the Society did not flourish, they made an alliance with the Ārya Samāj of Dayānanda in India and wanted to work together with that Samāj for the revival of the ancient glory of India. The combined group, known as the Theosophical Society of the Ārya Samāj, worked briefly together, but then Dayānanda refused to admit Olcott's claim to supernatural power and they parted. After this Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott decided to support the movement for the revival of Buddhism in India. They themselves went to Ceylon and became Buddhists.³⁷ The permanent headquarters of the Society was established in Adyar, Madras.

The main tenets of theosophy are that (a) there is a fundamental unity between the individual self and the Universal Self which, however, it is almost impossible to define, and (b) that there is a continuous clash of opposite forces, a law of cyclical order operating in every movement of life and the universe.³⁸ These are also the basic tenets of Indian systems. But the main emphasis in theosophy was on the occult practices and esoteric wisdom of the ancient world. The approach, therefore, was quite different from that of the Orientalists like Max Müller, for whom Madame Blavatsky had nothing but reproach.

The Orientalists looked at the ancient world from the historical point of view. India, according to Max Müller, furnished a unique record of how the speculative faculty of the early men developed through the centuries from the Vedas to the Upaniṣads and Vedānta. Madame Blavatsky insisted, on the other hand, that this "narrow" historical judgment does little justice to the real glory of the past; the achievement of the ancient world was the development of a perfect wisdom that gave men superhuman control over nature. Contrary to the assumption of comparative mythology, she declared that religions never evolve, but only degenerate. Traces of once profound and coherent systems could be found in the various religions of the present day. This she explained with

the theory of the cyclical order of the Universe. Sages, seers, adepts, she claimed, still had in their custody that perfected wisdom, and periodically they hand down that wisdom for the benefit of less fortunate mankind. The legends of gods, kings, magi, rishis, avatars, and the semidivine heroes should not be dismissed by supposedly "superior" modern knowledge. Myths and symbols deserve serious and understanding study for a glimpse into that ancient wisdom. She further insisted that the aim of this esoteric knowledge was the same as that of modern science. Both in their own ways aimed at the control of nature. Only modern science is limited in its effectiveness because it is materialistic and so disregards the basic unity of the mind and the universe. She topped her arguments with the claim of a personal acquaintance with some of those wise adepts or Mahātmās in India and Tibet. Though most of her recent biographers doubt her pretensions, she declared that she had visited India at least three times before 1879, when she finally arrived with her message of theosophy. She is even supposed to have spent seven long years in Tibet studying with her immortal Mahātmās. The name of the Theosophical Society spread far and wide when, on her arrival in India in 1879, she converted two important Englishmen, A. P. Sinnett and A. O. Hume,³⁹ who began to have the privilege of receiving precipitated letters written in forceful English from one of the turbaned and invisible theosophical Masters named Kut Hoomi. Madame Blavatsky's claim to supernatural power soon drew critical attention from various quarters. The Society for Psychical Research in London published a long report of investigation and declared her to have achieved "a title to permanent remembrance as one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting imposters in history."⁴⁰ Finally she left India in 1885, never to come back, but her influence continued to be felt among large numbers of people.

Max Müller, among others, was greatly disgusted by the "misrepresentation of the Hindu religion and Hindu philosophy in the books of Madame Blavatsky," and wrote that "lasting mischief" had been done to India by her and by her friends.⁴¹ She was ignorant of Sanskrit and Sanskrit literature, and "might certainly have done a good work if she had joined some really learned *pandits* familiar with the six systems of Hindu philosophy." The true teaching of Indian philosophers, he said, had been obscured rather than illuminated by being mixed up with poor and contemptible conjuring

tricks. Authoritative texts of these systems, he pointed out, could be had in translation, and anybody could see that there was no mystery about that philosophy or about the Mahātmās who are versed in it. "There is nothing esoteric," he declared, "in their teaching; all is open to those who are properly qualified and trustworthy. Their *Upaniṣads* and the *Darśanas* [philosophies] can be studied exactly like the philosophies of Plato and Descartes." He discounted the argument some theosophists gave that she at least had succeeded in rousing widespread interest in Indian philosophy among the Indians themselves who had begun to neglect their heritage. He felt that no good could really come from anything that was not perfectly honest and straightforward. "Vedāntism requires no bush, no trappings, no tricks. What we want is a historical and critical treatment, just the same as that which has been applied to Plato and Aristotle." As for the Mahātmās with their superhuman power of mind, Max Müller declared that it was most unfortunate to romanticize the learned hermits. It is true that they perform extraordinary acts of austerity, but they themselves "would be the last to claim any mysterious knowledge beyond what the *Śāstras* [sacred books] supply." Madame Blavatsky threatened to go to Oxford to face and confound the noted Orientalist, but though she went to preach to the undergraduates of Balliol, she never met Max Müller. The fundamental difference between the two was that while Max Müller was emphasizing philosophical Hinduism, Madame Blavatsky was talking about the popular *Purāṇic* phase of it.

Yeats certainly knew of these controversies raging around the inscrutable Madame, and yet he decided to become her admirer, if not a follower, because a creative artist's ways are not straight as the hawk's. They are tortuous like that of the butterfly. In "A Packet to Ezra Pound" (1928) Yeats explained his unconventional associations as those of the Muses who "resemble women who creep out at night and give themselves to unknown sailors and return to talk of Chinese porcelain . . . or of the Ninth Symphony. . . ." ⁴²

Theosophy promised to give answers to some of the important questions in Yeats's mind: how to regain the sense of unity between mind and matter, how to integrate the mind for the fullest development of personality, how to explain the most widely shared "unwritten tradition" of mankind—a tradition of the world of spirits—and, finally, how to understand the symbolic language believed to have

been expressed in the myths and legends of every country. He was not a penitent seeker, and, therefore, in spite of the fact that Madame Blavatsky was not inclined to encourage occult experiments, Yeats desired practical evidence of the actual growth of the mind. An Esoteric Section was accordingly organized for instruction in meditation and experiment. Yeats was made the secretary. He persuaded Annie Besant, a new convert to theosophy, to conduct experiments in clairvoyance with him, and though the results were never meant to be published he kept a regular record of the experience in a diary. He speculated a great deal about the invisible Mahātmās and was inclined to believe that possibly they were an "unconscious dramatization of H.P.B.'s own trance nature" or imaginary forms created by suggestion, either of her own mind or from some other mind, perhaps at a great distance.⁴³ And while thus speculating and conducting experiments himself, he was ever critical about the unquestioning belief of the devout theosophists. H.P.B. herself had enough sense of humour to refer to them privately as "flapdoodles". In August, 1890, Yeats lectured on "Theosophy and Modern Culture" with Annie Besant in the chair. Unsuccessful experiments in occult power were perhaps creating some disturbance among members of the Society. Presently he was called with great politeness by an official of the Section and asked to resign.⁴⁴ He explained his position and said that by teaching an abstract system without experiments or evidence they were making their followers "dogmatic" and "taking this out of life." More than anyone else their devout followers needed the common relation to life to enrich their souls. He did not like the fact that they did not marry, and considered that nothing was so bad for them as asceticism. He remonstrated with the official, but had to resign all the same. It is interesting to note that AE was contentedly working during these years as a clerk in a large Dublin warehouse, spending his evenings reading the sacred books of India, and talking about the august world, "from which for our sins we are outcast," that can be reached in meditation.⁴⁵

Broadly speaking, Yeats's resignation from the Theosophical Society in May, 1890, coincided with the end of the period of apprenticeship in his life. In 1889 his first book of verse, *The Wanderings of Oisín and Other Poems*, had launched him firmly on his poetic career. His occult experiments in the Theosophical Society were not very successful but he had read the books of Madame Blavatsky,

is the most popular and most widely practised. Hinduism being a subjective system, there is in its philosophies no Supreme God separated from the universe. The impersonal Spirit, or Self, or *Brahman* (neuter), with which the individual self has a basic unity, is the Ultimate Reality.⁶⁴ But the Spirit is completely inactive, and becomes active only by coming into association with Matter which, in Vedānta, is *Māyā* or "Illusion" though all energy and creative power emerge from it. Since Self or Spirit is the only Reality, the supreme virtue according to the Vedāntic system is to get rid of this "Illusion" as soon as one can, so that release could be had from the wheel of birth and rebirth. Mohini Chatterjee, a Vedāntist, asked the Dublin young men not even to pray, as "prayer was too full of hope, of desire, of life, to have any part in that acquiescence that was [the] beginning of wisdom."⁶⁵ Even our desire of immortality was no better, he said, than our other desires. It is a cold asceticism that dominates Vedānta. Yeats expressed this conception in the quatrain already quoted, but since he disapproved of it, he never printed the poem again.⁶⁶

Yeats found the Purāṇic conceptions more congenial than Vedāntic abstraction. Whereas Matter is "Illusion" in Vedānta, in Purāṇic Hinduism it has become *Devī* (the Goddess), *Śakti* (Power), the Eternal Feminine Principle of creation. The whole external universe is the product of the union of the Spirit and the Goddess, and is, therefore, sacred. As such the world should not be devaluated or discarded. Even liberation becomes meaningless to a worshipper of the Goddess, and thus a Purāṇic Hindu poet can sing metaphorically: "I like eating sugar, but I have no desire to become sugar."⁶⁷

This metaphysical speculation of duality in unity is not anything new in Purāṇic Hinduism.⁶⁸ But what is significant is that, as distinct from the Vedāntic system, the Female Principle came there to be considered as worthy of adoration. She finally stands for "the beauty, the marvel, the enticement and seduction of the living world." She is the "creative joy of life,"⁶⁹ and is often symbolized by the Lotus.⁷⁰ This symbol and the conception of the Female Principle of the world is similar to Yeats's. They do not tell us about an abstract ideal that tempts men to go beyond the world of eternal conflict and contradictions. Seeking after the Kingdom of Heaven is not for artists. "We are only permitted," wrote Yeats, "to desire life, and all the rest should be our complaints or our praise of that

exacting mistress [Rose] who can awake our lips into song with her kisses. But we must not give her all, we must deceive her a little at times."⁷¹ The poet does not want to become one with the Rose

Lest I no more hear common things that crave;
The weak worm hiding down in its small cave,
The field-mouse running by me in the grass,
And heavy mortal hopes that toil and pass; . . .⁷²

and yet he asserts that he must find "in all poor things that live a day" eternal Beauty wandering on her way. The conception is not different from that of mythological Hinduism. The other ideal of abstract perfection, or final release from the bonds of life, had been affirmed by his friend George Russell. According to Yeats, Russell took the thoughts of his followers off the technique of life, or left only their poorer thoughts for it.⁷³

Vedānta attracted George Russell because he had spiritual ambition. He might very well go into the Orient and assume "the yellow robe of a Bikku [Buddhist monk] in a Burmese forest."⁷⁴ Yeats's conception in the second half of the 'nineties, however, resembled those of mythological Hinduism. This can be seen not only in his symbol of life's perfection—the secret Rose, but more clearly in the unpublished manuscripts regarding the Irish Mystical Order that he was planning to organize since 1896.⁷⁵ Maud Gonne, Douglas Hyde, William Sharp (Fiona Macleod), MacGregor Mathers and his wife, and George Russell lent their support and help. The doctrines of this Order were to be the same as those of theosophy and the Golden Dawn. It is no wonder, therefore, that in the proposed ritual similar elements would be found as in Purāṇic Hinduism. The ritual was meant to be "a system of evocation and meditation—to reunite the perception of the spirit, of the dream, with natural beauty."⁷⁶ More than a decade later, Yeats was greatly impressed by Tagore, in whose poems he found this ideal realized. In Irish mythological terms the conception was to be represented by Aengus and Edain as the contrary principles at war in the world. The initiate, however, should learn "to blend the two forces together, so as to create completeness, for without Aengus . . . Edain was but a golden fly, Beauty without the Spiritual Intelligence."⁷⁷ The corresponding Indian symbols in the Purāṇic Hindu Iconography are Śiva and Śakti, Viṣṇu and Śrī, Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. Sometimes the symbol is a single figure, half

including the three volumes of *The Secret Doctrine* published in 1888, and had incorporated certain conceptions regarding life and the universe which he continued to hold for the rest of his life. These are the conceptions of reincarnation, the universal law of periodicity, of flux and reflux, and identity of the individual soul with the universal Over Soul. And they are always expressed in terms of some traditional symbol. Madame Blavatsky had drawn these ideas primarily from Indian sources, as she had declared that every philosophy of the world, "whether Semitic, Hamitic, or Turanian, as (the Orientalists) call it," had its key in the Hindu sacred books. In her judgment the pre-Vedic Brahmanism and Buddhism were the double source from which all religions had sprung.⁴⁶ By following her suggestion Yeats later discovered that these ideas existed, in however nebulous form, also in the European tradition of mysticism. While discussing these subjects in his essays or in his autobiography, Yeats understandably refers to the more respectable names of Pythagoras, Plato, Plotinus, Swedenborg, Boehme, and Blake rather than to Madame Blavatsky. But it is not difficult to show that in spite of numerous references to the European sources, he bases his private system in *A Vision* mainly on the traditional thinking of India which he came to know initially through AE and Madame Blavatsky and later from his own study of Patañjali and the Tantras.

Yeats's first attempt to apply Indian ideas for the symbolic interpretation of Irish legends can be found in *The Wanderings of Oisín*. He explained in a note to the *Poems* (1895) that after his early attempts to write upon Indian subjects, his subject matter became Irish from the "moment" he began *The Wanderings of Oisín*,⁴⁷ which is founded upon a Middle Irish dialogue of St. Patrick and Oisín and a certain Gaelic poem of the eighteenth century. The subject matter is undoubtedly Irish, but Yeats's interpretation of the symbolic import of the three islands visited by Oisín, the "Island of the Living", the "Island of Victories", and the "Island of Forgetfulness", seems to suggest the three *guṇas*, the three aspects of Matter. The life of the first island is pagan and Oisín spends there a hundred years hunting, fishing and making love. On the Island of Victories Oisín spends another hundred years trying to deliver a sad, fair lady, a prisoner of a "dark demon dry as a withered sedge" and tied with a wave-rusted chain to two old eagles. Oisín again and again subdues the demon, but by some invincible power

the demon revives every time and the unfinished battle goes on until Oisín is tired out and so leaves for the Island of Forgetfulness. As none knows where contentment could be found, the Island of Forgetfulness is suggested by his demon companion to be a better place. There a "monstrous slumbering folk," looking more like beasts than human beings, sleep forever under the starlight. Owls, not eagles, wander over their limbs, and they are self-hypnotized by the sound of the "bell-branch" held in their hands. Oisín falls a victim of this hypnotic inaction. But being a hero his dreams are disturbed by the shadows of the heroic kings of the ancient Irish Red Branch. They come with roaring of laughter and songs and move as they moved once, making love or piercing the tempest with sails. Oisín at last stirs himself out of this dream of forgetfulness and leaves for Ireland, where he would revive the heroic ideals of the Celtic world. This, it seems, is an implied criticism of the Indian ideal of the negation of life, first expounded to him by Mohini Chatterjee in his early Dublin days. According to the Vedāntic conception, life steeped in *tamas* is the worst possible state one could have. Life expressing *rajas* is better, though the highest ideal is to acquire the quality of *sattva*, a condition of complete detachment in which nothing matters. Oisín lives the three lives in a sequence and ultimately decides against them all. Though the ideals of St. Patrick's Ireland were equally unheroic, Oisín considers it worth-while to spend there his life as a dreamer of heroic dreams. This Oisín is Yeats himself. He discussed the *guṇas* in two essays written much later in life,⁴⁸ and used the ideas more explicitly in the early versions of *The Shadowy Waters* (1900, 1905).

Yeats, therefore, came across Indian conceptions quite early in life. Of these he rejected at once the Vedāntic asceticism and abstractions that he came to know through AE and Mohini Chatterjee. He chose instead to follow the approach of Madame Blavatsky whose works are full of references to mythological or Purāṇic Hinduism with its rich store of symbols. Purāṇic Hinduism with its elaborate systems promised to answer his questions regarding the connection between the natural and supernatural worlds. It also gave him suggestions to interpret symbolically the ancient myths of Ireland.

1891-1911 : Further Ringing Echoes

Yeats parted from the theosophists in 1890, after which for about twenty years he does not seem to have had any concern with India and Indian thought, as if his early interest was no more than a vague dream of the first flush of youth, and he had awoke from this dream to take a vigorous part in the Irish renaissance. His life was indeed more complex, varied and active than would have suited a man with the Vedāntic ideals expounded by Mohini Chatterjee. According to what Mohini Chatterjee had taught, "the hermit was above all the labourers," and action of any kind was a little vulgar and trivial. Yeats, however, became involved in increasingly diverse activities, which confirms the suggestion made earlier that he never really followed the ascetic ideal. He fell helplessly and unrequitedly in love, took a prominent part in Irish politics and the Irish nationalist movement, founded several literary societies in London and Dublin, edited Irish anthologies and an ambitious three-volume edition of Blake with detailed commentaries and a long introduction, and undertook a regular literary journalism. This could not be the picture of a remorseful soul seeking salvation.

Among Yeats's other activities during this period was his secret project, begun in 1896, of founding an Irish Mystical Order. The project was finally given up after about six years, probably because Maud Gonne broke away from him by marrying John MacBride in 1903. In the meantime he had persuaded himself to begin a lifelong intimacy with a gifted married woman and took rooms at 20 Woburn Buildings, which he occupied for the next twenty years. Theatre management also occupied him for more than a decade after 1898. Yeats was thus busy and active in spheres that had no apparent connection with India. My contention, however, is that, even during this period, Yeats never quite lost interest in the Indian systems. On the contrary, he was still working on the few basic Indian ideas that had reached him mainly through the Theosophical Society, and some of the symbols he was using in the nineties closely resemble those of the mythological or Purāṇic Hinduism.

His interest in these symbols and ideas does not mean that Yeats had become a Hindu for all practical purposes. He was pri-

marily a poet, and his problem was how to arrange symbolically his ideas and experiences for use in his poetic expression. The very start of his poetic career coincided with the first excitement of the theosophical movement which, like the Orientalist movement, was for the first time drawing enthusiastic attention of the West to the contribution made by the East, particularly ancient India, in the field of religious and philosophical thought and literature. Guided by his natural inclination and supported by the symbolical systems of India, Yeats took to the new ideas with characteristic passion and utilized the experience in his creative writings for the rest of his life. Moreover, he did not just take those conceptions as they came, but established corroboration by European mystics, as well as by ancient Irish myths and the "unwritten tradition" among Irish peasants. In innumerable notes to the poems, as well as in his essays, he always tries to explain his symbols with reference to those of other ancient civilizations, thus emphasizing their universality. In these notes India's name appears consistently.

Yeats's interest in the Orient was not guided mainly by his urge to discover the *alter ego* of Europe. The books of Madame Blavatsky gave him the important clue that a startling similarity of mystical conception underlies the myths of various countries of the world. In her attempt to establish this thesis she relied heavily on the symbolic myths of Purāṇic Hinduism with an unbroken heritage of tradition. The Irish myths were not well known at that time. In her writings, therefore, no prominence was given to them.. But Yeats, who carried on the programme in the specific field of Irish mythology, must have found her books instructive.

It is, of course, true that after he met in 1886 John O'Leary, the Fenian, Yeats became an ardent nationalist and never again wrote on any but Irish subjects. But all the credit for rousing his deep interest in Irish myths and legends should not go to John O'Leary. Yeats met Madame Blavatsky only a year later, and, however controversial a figure she might have been, she should not be denied her share of the credit. It was from her books that Yeats learned the symbolical way of interpreting traditional myths and legends, and then began to use the method in his writings on Irish themes even before he came to know about the symbolist movement in France.⁴⁹

His way of reading symbolically the ancient Irish myths in terms

of theosophy and Indian systems was also helped by the works of Celtic scholars like Sir John Rhys and Henri D'Arbois de Jubainville. Rhys had come to the conclusion that the Druids of ancient Ireland had a religion similar to that of other Aryans and had a similar pantheon.⁵⁰ Rhys's Hibbert Lectures on the Celtic religion were published in 1888 and provoked widespread discussion.⁵¹ He had worked out a parallelism between the ancient Irish gods and their Hindu, Persian, Greek, and Norse counterparts. Celtic cosmogony and theogony were, according to Rhys, part of a primordial myth. Jubainville emphasized in his book, *Le Cycle Mythologique Irlandais*, six early invasions of Ireland that had contributed to the creation of the Celtic tradition.⁵² At the time of the Milesian invasion, the scholar-poet Amergin, master of nature's hidden laws and forces, was supposed to have ridden on the prow of the first ship.⁵³ Yeats says in a later essay that "the Song of Amergin," the one fragment of pagan Irish philosophy that has come down, "seems Asiatic."⁵⁴ Jubainville also pointed out the existence of the Celtic doctrine of reincarnation, and of the dual aspect of evil. Yeats in 1890 commented on the contribution made by these scholars to Celtic study.⁵⁵ Fables and fairy tales, Yeats wrote, were no more than "a haystack of dead follies" to the old folklorists who expected to find in them "one little needle of historical truth." The approach of Jubainville, Rhys, and others, however, had radically changed the situation. One could now see in the fables and fairy tales "old beautiful mythologies wherein ancient man said symbolically all he knew about God and Man's soul." Though now turned into old wives' tales, the myths really tell us, wrote Yeats, of once famous religions, and they are "still luminous from the rosy dawn of human revery."

Rhys and Jubainville corroborated what Yeats had read in *The Secret Doctrine*. The Theosophical Society was thus, according to John Eglinton, "as truly the nucleus from which the Irish Literary Renaissance originated as were the contemporary Gaelic and literary societies."⁵⁶ Yeats also declared once to Eglinton that in a few years the Theosophical Society "had done more for Irish literature than Trinity College in its three centuries."⁵⁷

Yeats first came to know of the symbols of the Purāṇic Hindu systems from *The Secret Doctrine*. He was a frequent visitor to Madame Blavatsky when the book was being written. But it has

already been mentioned that she was not his only source for Indian ideas. He learned about the Upaniṣads from his friend George Russell, who often quoted to him passages from the sacred books. But he was not satisfied with those abstract ideas. He asked Russell the name of some translator, and then bought the book, but the most eminent scholars left him "incredulous".⁵⁸ The Upaniṣads with their disquisitions about the nature of the Ultimate Reality, *Brahman* or Self, must have seemed to him too abstract for any poetic use. He reacted similarly to the doctrines of Vedānta that Mohini Chatterjee expounded in Dublin. Moreover, Vedānta recommends asceticism and renunciation, which were not acceptable to Yeats. But the symbol of perfection in Purāṇic Hinduism, as he found in *The Secret Doctrine*, came to resemble his own symbol of the Rose.⁵⁹

The Rose, of course, does not appear in Eastern myths. But Yeats pointed out himself, in a note to *The Wind among the Reeds* (1889), that his conception of the Rose had its counterpart in the Lotus, "the flower of Life," which is imagined "blossoming upon the Tree of Life" in some Eastern countries.⁶⁰ He had selected the Rose because it belonged to the Western tradition, and was "sacred to the Virgin Mary." Apuleius's adventurer also ate this Rose "when he was changed out of the ass's shape and received into the fellowship of Isis." The symbol of the Rose was traditional, but Yeats's implication was not. He "imagined it growing upon the Tree of Life." And to make the point clearer, he added this comment in the general notes to the *Collected Works* (1933): "I notice upon reading these poems for the first time for several years that the quality symbolized as the Rose differs from the Intellectual Beauty of Shelley and of Spenser in that I have imagined it as suffering with man and not as something pursued and seen from afar."⁶² It is to be noticed that Yeats is not referring to the abstract idea of beauty beyond life's reach. This conception of the symbol of spiritual love and supreme beauty resembles that of *Śakti* or *Devī*, the Goddess, in Purāṇic Hinduism. A summary of the main aspects of Hinduism may be helpful in this place to make the resemblance clear.

Hindu religion as a complex system has been regarded as having four phases that run into each other and are nowhere separable by sharply defined lines.⁶³ These phases may be called: (a) Ritualistic (Vedic), (b) Philosophical (Upaniṣadic, Vedāntic), (c) Mythological (Purāṇic), and (d) Nomistic. Of these mythological Hinduism

male and half female. In some forms of Buddhism the conception is represented by Adi Buddha and his consort in embrace, and in the Tibetan *Mahāyāna* doctrine by the embracing figure of *Yab-Yum*, the divine male and female.

If this similarity seems to be a mere coincidence, there are clearer evidences to show that Yeats had been thinking in terms of the Indian systems. In the proposed "sword initiation" of the ritual, which was subtitled "The Chase after the Ideal", three dogs—black, white, and red were to represent "Illusions" on the path.⁷⁸ These dogs reappear in the first version of *The Shadowy Waters* (1900). In the stage direction, the sail of Forgael's ship is said to have "three rows of hounds, the first dark, the second red, and the third white with red ears," to make a "conventional pattern upon the sail."⁷⁹ As Yeats's "conventional pattern" was not very familiar to the audience he gave some elucidation in a programme note for a performance at the Abbey Theatre in 1905 and suggested that the three rows of dogs may "correspond to the *tamas*, *rajas*, and *sattva* qualities of the Vedānta philosophy, or to the three colours of the Alchemists."⁸⁰ These three *guṇas* are later explained more fully in his essay "The Holy Mountain" (1934). They are the three aspects of Matter, the female principle of the universe. *Sattva* is purity, serenity, calm, harmony, wisdom; *rajas* is activity, energy, emotion and passion; and *tamas* stands for the principle of darkness, obstruction, inertia, anger, dullness, and sorrow. They are common in all the Indian systems. Vedānta recommends that both *tamas* and *rajas* should be subdued. Tantra, a further development of Purāṇic Hinduism, however, eulogizes the heroic qualities that arise from *rajas*. Yeats, in any case, was not using the symbols according to the Vedāntic principles, for, if he did, all the three aspects surely would not have been painted on the sail of Forgael's ship. In an unused prologue, meant to be spoken by an old juggler, the symbolical dogs are explained to be the three aspects of the personality of the juggler, and of everyone else by implication.⁸¹ The juggler is rather afraid of them, but he does not decide to drive away the "lesser" two and cling to the "superior" one. That would be going beyond life. Sometimes the black dog, he says, gets on his back, though he had not been juggling, but he would not "talk about him for he was very wicked." Whenever he is "angry or excited or running about," he does not know the red dog as different from himself. But there are

other moments when he escapes from both the black and red dogs, and it is then that "the pale dog leads me when I would go, go to everything impossible and lasting." It is evident that in Yeats's conception the three *guṇas*, symbolized here as the three dogs, are meant to remain side by side in a human personality. The dream of perfection may haunt us momentarily, but the vacillation between the extremes of the ideals would be sure to remain. In later years he clarified his position further, but never changed it.

It has been pointed out by Ellmann that "towards the end of the 'nineties Yeats's symbolic cluster thickened to the point of crowding" and that they reach "their greatest abundance in *The Shadowy Waters*."⁸² By dramatically arranging the symbols Yeats wanted to express in that play his conception of "the relation of man and woman," as he told Russell.⁸³ The idea of the drama was discussed between them when they were "boys walking along Leinster Rd."⁸⁴ The hero was then supposed to be "a world wanderer trying to escape from himself." "He surprises a galley in the waters. There is a beautiful woman there. He thinks that through love he can escape from himself. He casts a magical spell on Dectora." Russell says that, in the original version of the play, Forgael found at last that the love created by a spell was the empty echo and a "shadow of himself." He therefore unrolls the spell, "seeking alone for the world of the immortals." This would eminently suit the Vedāntic conception, shared by George Russell, that life is a "shadow", an "Illusion", and one should unroll the spell as soon as possible and seek immortality. This first version, however, was never published. Russell pitied Yeats because later he "changed this plot which was logical" when he himself fell in love and so "did not like the notion of going alone to the world of the immortals."

The Shadowy Waters was twice revised,⁸⁵ once before it was performed at the Court Theatre, London, for a theosophical convention on July 8, 1905,⁸⁶ and then again in 1911 to prepare an acting version with more characterization and appropriate prose lines for the sailors. Of these three versions, the second version is more full of symbols than the others. The three rows of hounds do not appear in the revised versions, but the scheme of the play remains unaltered. The implications of the cluster of symbols can be better understood with a reference to their Indian counterparts.

The title of the play has some importance for understanding

the intention of the poet. I refer to Russell's letter, a portion of which has already been quoted. Russell says there that he had first noticed "Yeats's interest in life and its shadows" when he got excited over a drawing Russell had made of a man on a mountain startled by his own gigantic shadow in the mist. Russell was nearly sixteen or seventeen when he did that drawing. Therefore "the dualist consciousness was already awakened" in Yeats by 1884. Russell points out further that in the first volume of Yeats's poems, *The Wanderings of Oisín*, "this curious preoccupation of the poet with the self and its shadow" is evident. The Vedāntic conception of Self and non-Self, Reality and "Illusion", is clearly suggested in this exposition of Yeats's early interest. Yeats, as has been indicated before, never followed the Vedāntic conclusions. But he continued to work on the conception of the shadow of the self. The drama of *The Shadowy Waters* takes place on "water" which is tangible manifestation of the divine essence in the Indian systems,⁸⁷ and in Yeatsian language—"a symbol of the drifting indefinite bitterness of life."⁸⁸ The title of the play indicates, therefore, Yeats's interpretation of life which is supposed to be a "shadow" of the Self. And this interpretation does not, in any of the three published versions, follow Russell's position, which is Vedāntic. In another three years Yeats wrote *Where There Is Nothing* (1903), where the hero decides to go alone beyond these "Shadowy Waters" to the land of the immortals. But in the earlier play the dream of a vision of perfection is meant to be realized through the love of Forgael and Dectora. The hero of *Where There Is Nothing* is a Vedāntist like Russell; in the play under discussion the hero and the heroine choose a path that resembles that of Purāṇic Hinduism.

Dectora, who is the same as the female principle of the world, forever has her home in "winds and waters" (l. A, 282). She has a red rose "embroidered over her breast" (A). Forgael does not want to leave her alone on this vast ocean of indefinite bitterness of life, because "Beauty without the Spiritual Intelligence" would be but a golden fly. Forgael stands for that "Spiritual Intelligence", and without him she would have to face "unimaginable storms of winds and wave" that would rise against her (ll. B, 317-18). The painted raven of destruction flutters on her flag, and she comes from her foster-mother's garden in the "South" that symbolized for Yeats earthly life of passion and desire (ll. A, 97-101).⁸⁹ And yet, para-

doxically, she is described as the "topmost blossom on the boughs of Time" (ll. *A*, 178), and without her Forgael is to remain unfulfilled, though he has all the wisdom in his possession. Dectora wants to move towards the East, the place of sunrise and hope in Yeatsian symbology. She urges Forgael to take earthly life and desire (ll. *A*, 349-400). Being the female principle of the universe, she has always sought life; but "Forgael seeks death" or unity with the undifferentiated Self.⁹⁰ Yeats pointed out in the unpublished programme note that "in some way the uniting of her vivid force with his abyss-seeking desire for the waters of Death makes a perfect humanity."⁹¹ In the first version, Dectora was more distinctly referred to as the symbol for what a Vedāntic would call *Māyā* or "Illusion". When she tempts the soldiers with her promise of giving them "wealth of oxen and sheep" besides a hundred shields, and swords, and drinking-bowls, if they rescue her from the magical charm of Forgael, she is at once recognized by a sailor to be the eternal promise-breaker. She promises everything, but betrays ultimately and weaves a "net to take us" (ll. *A*, 187-190). She is *Māyā*. Forgael, being the "Spiritual Intelligence", is absolutely inactive and so he does not participate in the ravages of her ship, leaving that for the *tāmasic* soldiers, who, we are told, are fond of brown and not "yellow ale", *Amṛta*, or the nectar of immortality (ll. *A*, 243-44). Dectora is excited by the vision of a red-eared hound that follows a hornless deer, a vision of heroic life, expressive only of *rajas* (ll. *A*, 325-28): Forgael remains unmoved, and when she demands punishment for the soldiers who had ravaged her ship, he illuminates her with an exposition of reincarnation (ll. *B*, 429-35) and Karma (ll. *B*, 292-300). He then persuades her that death is merely of the body, the soul remaining untarnished, and that all her love from the beginning of time had really been the shadow of her eternal love for him, the male principle of the universe. He claims that he himself had been Arthur, Iolan, and all other heroes whom she loved in the past (ll. *B*, 429ff). Dectora, in the first version, says that she had fought twelve battles with twelve kings (ll. *A*, 271ff), and now she recognizes that all her life she had been hoping to be reunited with the ultimate male principle. Her "sleep" had been long, and she prepares for the final union with Forgael. The theme reappears in *A Vision*, where after twelve cycles of reincarnation comes the thirteenth circle or thirteenth cone of perfection. This again resembles the Indian conception.⁹²

However, what is significant in Yeats is that he is unwilling, as Ellmann has pointed out, "to commit his poetry to locating the perfect state definitely in life or in death."⁹³ Forgael and Dectora drift on alone, "awaiting death and what came after, or some mysterious transformation of the flesh, an embodiment of every lover's dream."⁹⁴ The dream is different from Russell's Vedāntic dream and affirms life. Yet it did not satisfy Yeats by the end of the first decade of this century, because the idea is still vague and in the love of Forgael and Dectora the element of sex is still absent. From around 1914, he began to refer to sexual union as the symbol of a vision of perfection.

Among other Indian conceptions that recur in Yeats's poetry, those of reincarnation and periodic destruction of the world are important. They initially came from his association with the Theosophical Society. He never uses them as items of religious faith, but to express his dreams of life, or particular states of mind.⁹⁵ It should, however, be pointed out that not those conceptions only, but some of the symbols connected with them, have their counterparts in Yeats's poetry of this period.

When a cycle has completed itself, the creator and the sustainer of the universe, according to the Purāṇic Hindu myths, manifests his destructive aspect. He assumes an animal or human form, comes to destroy the iniquities of the world, and lays the foundations of a new cycle. Thus in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* the symbol of cosmic destruction is the Boar, and the present cycle of creation is called by his name—*Barāha Kalpa* (the cycle of the Boar).⁹⁶ This symbolic boar is ubiquitous in all mythologies. In *The Wind among the Reeds* Yeats wrote a long note on the history of this symbol,⁹⁷ and used it in his poetry, either to express the bitterness of unrequited love or his displeasure with the present civilization that has no heroic ideals.⁹⁸

Another interesting symbol that most probably came from an Indian source is that of the bird. Yeats used the symbol variously in his poems written from his early years. Awareness of this symbol can be connected with the development of his "philosophy" of self and anti-self. He must have read in *The Secret Doctrine* that the swan stands for the pure soul in Indian mythology.⁹⁹ The famous Upaniṣadic image of a pair of birds, that has been mentioned earlier as representing the higher and the lower selves of our being, was

most probably known to him through George Russell. This seems particularly likely from what Russell wrote to Sean O'Faolain: "You can see in the first volume 'The Wanderings of Oisín' (*sic*) this curious preoccupation of the poet with the self and its shadow. It is in many lines." And Russell, who was Yeats's closest friend in his early period, considers that from this preoccupation was evolved "a vast philosophy of self and anti-self."¹⁰⁰ This comment sheds some new light on the poem "An Indian Song" that Yeats published in *The Dublin University Review* of December, 1886. The poem read:

Oh wanderer in the southern weather,
Our isle awaits us, on each lea
The pea-hens dance, in crimson feather
A parrot swaying on a tree
Rages at his own image in the enamelled sea.

There dreamy Time lets fall his sickle
And Life the sandals of her fleetness,
And sleek young Joy is no more fickle,
And Love is kindly and deceitless,
And life is over save the murmur and the sweetness.

There we will moor our lonely ship
And wander ever with woven hands,
Murmuring softly, lip to lip,
Along the grass, along the sands—
Murmuring how far away are all earth's feverish lands.

How we alone of mortals are
Hid in the earth's most hidden part,
While grows our love an Indian star,
A meteor of the burning heart,
One with the waves that softly round us laugh and dart.

Like swarming bees, one with the dove
That moans and sighs a hundred days;
—How when we die our shades will rove.
Dropping at eve in coral bays
A vapoury footfall on the ocean's sleepy blaze.

The parrot of this poem, raging "at his own image in the enamelled sea," seems to be an early Yeatsian version of the Upaniṣadic symbol. The parrot rages at his own shadow, as Forgael later rages at the "shadowy waters". The earlier version of the poem quoted here

has an implication of dissatisfaction with earthly life. "Mortals" in this poem are denounced as ignorant creatures, living like swarming bees and the dove. They will not find blessedness when they are dead. So the "Wanderer" is reminded of the blessed isle where life is quiet and joy deep, and where "Time" forgets to use his sickle. Later when he had become dissatisfied with this kind of vague ideal for a perfected world, Yeats used the symbol of the parrot in the poem "On a Picture of a Black Centaur by Edmund Dulac" to express his total rejection of the whole conception.¹⁰¹ The centaur in that poem, representing the poet's soul, is asked to stretch out and "sleep a long Saturnian sleep" forgetting the "horrible green parrots" which once drove the poet "half insane" in search of old mummy wheat "in the mad abstract dark." This obscure symbol of the parrot seems to be related to the earlier one raging against his own shadow in the waters. Through the years these poetic parrots have changed their colour from crimson to green, but their symbolic import remains the same. In the Upaniṣads, the image is of just "two birds" sitting on the same branch of a tree. In the Purāṇas *haṃsa* or the swan is the symbol of a free soul.¹⁰² Yeats later included the heron, hawk, and eagle, together with the swan, to symbolize subjective loneliness.¹⁰³ My conviction is that from a concern with subjective loneliness, he became interested in Yoga, an age-old practical Hindu system of meditation which could be used for the development of personality, and he found support in Yoga for his personal philosophy of the mask, or of self and anti-self.

In the subjective system of India the individual self, as has been pointed out earlier, has a basic identity with the Absolute Self. And Yoga, which Yeats came to know from his association with the Theosophical Society, maintains that it is within man's power to attain unity with the Absolute Self. Development of the individual self or personality is not, of course, the aim of Yoga. Personality is regarded in the Indian system as a mask, as if human beings are actors on the stage of life with the masks of their personalities on their real faces, and this mask should be put off to achieve one's real identity.¹⁰⁴ This view is certainly the opposite of what Yeats maintained. But Yoga being only a discipline of integrating the mind, and attaining superhuman power, one can adapt the discipline for any purpose. Thus *Rāja Yoga* recommends that one should practise this discipline to attain unity with the Absolute Self, and to get

release from the "Illusion" of Matter or for the purpose of putting the mask of personality off the real face. *Hatha Yoga* practices, on the other hand, promise superhuman power. If by adequately meditating that "I am He" one can attain unity with the Absolute, it is then equally possible to build one's personality by meditating on any other image of one's choice. In Yeatsian terms, you should put on God's mask and become God; if, however, you choose otherwise, put on some other mask and you will not fail. What is important is that one must will it fully.

This may be the reason why Yeats maintained a lifelong interest in Yoga and later studied Patañjali as soon as the authoritative edition of *The Yoga System of Patanjali* was published in 1914 from the Harvard University Press.¹⁰⁵ The system has an important relation with his "philosophy" in *A Vision*. It has been suggested earlier, guessing from the "aphorisms" he wrote in 1886, that probably he had already come to know about the Yoga system in some form. From a letter to Florence Farr it appears that both of them had been practising Yoga since sometime before 1906.¹⁰⁶ Yeats accuses her in that letter that her "eastern meditation" was taking her away from life. Since in the same letter, after lamenting her deplorable change, Yeats mentions that he himself, however, had "begun eastern meditation" of her sort, but with the object of trying "to lay hand upon some dynamic and substantializing force as distinguished from the eastern quiescent and supersensualizing state of the soul—a movement downward upon life," there is reason to believe that he was practising *Hatha Yoga* under some of the many teachers available to him in London. George Russell also mentions that he remembers Yeats playing at one time "with Tatwic (*sic*) symbols."¹⁰⁷ These symbols, he says, are so complex that he would have to read over again the *Śivāgama* to refresh his memory. The name of *Śivāgama*, a Tāntric book, occurs in *The Secret Doctrine* where Madame Blavatsky warns that "nothing but harm can result from any following of its precepts," and strongly dissuades any aspirants from attempting any of those *Hatha Yoga* practices.¹⁰⁸

Another evidence of Yeats's knowledge of the Yogic system, even before 1902, is an unpublished manuscript regarding the Irish Mystical Order ritual. The project was given up in 1902, but in the draft of a proposed rite Yeats suggested the use of the *Tatwas* (*sic*). The initiates, Yeats proposed, should be given "plain elemental

Tatwas" and they should also understand "that this is Indian in the same way as Universal Teaching" that is given after the "Admission".¹⁰⁹ Madame Blavatsky exhaustively discusses the *tattvas* or "Principles of Creation" which all the aspirants of the Theosophical Society had to learn. Yeats never used these ideas in his creative writing, and the *tattvas* or "Faculties" and "Principles" that he later developed in his private system in *A Vision* resemble Patañjali's, and not Madame Blavatsky's, exposition. These facts are mentioned just to establish that Yeats had some intimate knowledge of the Yoga system at least from the beginning of the century. The relevance of this fact is that from the Yogic conception of integrating the personality Yeats might have been helped in developing his theory of self and anti-self. The influence on him of Nietzsche's conception of the superman's mask has been emphasized.¹¹⁰ The suggestion here is that the Yogic conception also was in Yeats's mind.

The modest aim of the present article has been to show how Yeats was preoccupied with some Indian ideas even before he met Tagore. Some of the symbols that he used during the last decade of the century, particularly in *The Shadowy Waters*, closely resemble those of Purāṇic Hinduism. His dream of a perfected condition was gradually modified by an intense affirmation of life, and the symbols consequently changed. But the philosophy of the mask that he developed at the beginning of the century gained support from a knowledge of Yoga, and his conception of the Unity of Being prepared him for the appreciation of the Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore.

¹ Richard Ellmann, *W. B. Yeats: The Man and the Masks* (London, 1949), pp. 22 ff.

² W. B. Yeats, *Autobiography* (New York, 1938), p. 9. Later referred to as *Auto*.

³ More than forty years later he remembered those days of fanatical faith in science and wrote in the poem "At Algeciras—a Meditation upon Death":

Often at evening when a boy
Would I carry to a friend—
Hoping more substantial joy
Did an older mind commend—
Not such as are in Newton's metaphor,
But actual shells of Rosses' level shore,

See W. B. Yeats, *Collected Poems* (London, 1950), p. 278. Later referred to as *Collected Poems*.

⁴ Charles Johnston, "Yeats in the Making" in *Poet Lore*, XIII (June, 1906), pp. 103 ff. Later referred to as *Poet Lore*.

⁵ *Auto.*, p. 58.

⁶ *Idem.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁸ John Eglinton, *A Memoir of AE* (London, 1937), p. 8.

⁹ See T. S. Dume's unpublished dissertation, *W. B. Yeats: A study of his readings* (Temple University, 1950). Russell read the following books also as and when they were published: Charles Gore, *Lux Mundi: Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation* (John Murray, 1889); Charles Johnston, *The Awakening of the Self*, translated from the *Sankara Acharya* (New York, 1897), and *From the Upanishads* (Dublin, 1896); Mead and J. C. Chattopadhyaya, *The Upanishads*, trns., 2 vols. (Theosophical Publg. Co., 1896); and Steward Dwight Walker, *Reincarnation: A Study of Forgotten Truth* (Ward Lock, 1888). See *Printed Writings by George Russell: a bibliography*, compiled by Alan Denson (Northwestern University, 1961). The last book is later referred to as *AE Bibliography*.

¹⁰ Letter to Simone Téry in George Russell's *The Living Torch*, ed. Monk Gibbon (New York, 1938), p. 45.

¹¹ *Letters of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Allan Wade (New York, 1955), p. 123. Later referred to as Yeats's *Letters*.

¹² *Auto.*, p. 399.

¹³ *Poet Lore*, p. 122.

¹⁴ In a letter to Ernest Boyd, in 1915, Yeats wrote: "The Hermetic Society was founded by Chas Johnston and myself. It was not theosophical (in the present sense of that word) at the start, but was for general mystical study. It had no connection with the later society. George Russell was not a member. He was very young." Russell was, of course, only two years younger, as I have already mentioned. See Ernest Boyd, *Ireland's Literary Renaissance* (New York, 1916), pp. 213-4.

¹⁵ *Auto.*, p. 80.

¹⁶ Ellmann, *The Man and the Masks*, pp. 42 ff.

¹⁷ AE joined the Theosophical Society either late in 1888 or in 1889. In December, 1890, he received the probationer membership of the Esoteric Section. In April, 1891, a small residential community of the Dublin theosophists was established at 3 Upper Ely Place. He left the Society for a few years after the death of the American leader W. Q. Judge, who had failed to become the president of the Society. In 1904 AE started a new Society with a charter from Colonel Olcott in India. In 1909 this Society seceded from the Indian Society when Annie Besant became the president. AE remained, however, the president of the Dublin Society till 1933. The next year he sold his house and gave away his possessions to prepare for death, and died in London in 1935. See *AE Bibliography*.

¹⁸ See "The Pathway" in W. B. Yeats, *Collected Works* (1908), VIII, 197.

¹⁹ *Idem.* ^{20 21} *Collected Poems*, pp. 14-15.

²² See *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach (New York, 1957), p. 723. Later referred to as *Variorum*.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 70. ²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 734.

²⁵ Shri Purohit Swami, *The Aphorisms of Yoga* (London, 1938).

²⁹ See letter to Olivia Shakespeare written on June 30, 1932, in Yeats's *Letters*, p. 798.

³⁰ *Variorum*, pp. 731-32.

³¹ Dowden in his review of Russell's book of poems, *Homeward*, expressed dislike of his use of non-European Hindu conceptions like that of Brahma. Russell, perhaps vainly, protested that to mention Brahma and to use the sacred feeling with which long generations of Hindus have chanted the spirit as "OM" was not to lose oneself in the "cheap theosophy of the East." He quoted lines from the *Upanishads* and *Yoga Aphorisms* and bluntly declared that he was pagan in his childhood and had grown quite naturally into Indian methods of thought, and therefore he must continue until he saw "the True without a Veil." (Letter to Dowden on August 6, 1894.)

³² See P. S. Deshmukh, *Religion of the Vedic Literature* (London, 1933), p. 198.

³³ See "A Tower on the Apennines" in *The Cutting of an Agate*, in *Essays and Introductions*, p. 291.

³⁴ Yeats's *Letters*, p. 111.

³⁵ His interest in Kālidāsa and other Sanskrit dramatists continued in his later years. Speaking to a gathering of Indian students at Oxford, in 1918 or 1919, Yeats said that "at one period of his literary career he had tried to steep himself in the translations of the Sanskrit plays and to assimilate in his writings whatever in them seemed valuable and congenial." See C. L. Wrenn, *William Butler Yeats, A Literary Study* (Durham, 1920), p. 13.

³⁶ See *Variorum*, p. 841.

³⁷ *Collected Poems*, pp. 12-13.

³⁸ John Eglinton, *A Memoir of AE* (London, 1937), p. 18.

³⁹ See "A Visionary" in *The Celtic Twilight* included in *Mythologies* (London, 1959), pp. 12 ff.

⁴⁰ Arthur H. Nethercot, *The First Five Lives of Annie Besant* (Chicago, 1961), pp. 194 ff.

⁴¹ For a much more adequate treatment of theosophy see Alfred Boyd Kuhn, *Theosophy; a modern revival of ancient wisdom* (New York, 1930); Nethercot, *The First Five Lives of Annie Besant*; Ellmann, *The Man and the Masks and Identity of Yeats*.

⁴² Hume became in 1885 the first president of the Indian National Congress.

⁴³ *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, III (London, 1885), p. 207.

⁴⁴ See Max Müller, *Auld Lang Syne*, II (New York, 1889), pp. 164 ff.

⁴⁵ See W. B. Yeats, *A Vision* (New York, 1956), p. 24. Later referred to as *A Vision* (B).

⁴⁶ Unp. MS. quoted in Ellmann, *The Man and the Masks*, pp. 67 ff.

⁴⁷ Unp. MS. quoted in A. Norman Jeffares, *W. B. Yeats: Man and Poet* (Yale University, 1949), p. 52. Later referred to as Jeffares, *W. B. Yeats*.

⁴⁸ John Eglinton, *Irish Literary Portraits* (London, 1935), p. 45. Later referred to as Eglinton, *Irish Literary Portraits*.

⁴⁹ See *Isis Unveiled*, II, p. 639.

⁵⁰ See *Variorum*, p. 841.

⁵¹ See "The Holy Mountain" (1934), and "The Mandukya Upanishad" (1935) in *Essays and Introductions* (New York, 1961), pp. 461ff., and p. 482. Later referred to as *Essays and Introductions*.

⁴⁹ In *The Wanderings of Oisín* (1889), for example, he was already using symbols, whereas his acquaintance with the French movement did not begin until 1891 when he learned about French symbolism from Arthur Symonds.

⁵⁰ Moore, *Unicorn*, pp. 47ff.

⁵¹ *Celtic Heathendom* (London, 1888).

⁵² *Le Cycle Mythologique Irlandais* (1884) is Vol. II of his twelve volume *Cour de Littérature Celtique* (1883-1902). The translation of this book was not published till 1901. But according to Richard Irvine Best, the translator, Maud Gonne introduced Yeats to Jubainville in Paris, probably in 1896, and Yeats knew his lectures at the Collège de France. See T. S. Dume's unpublished dissertation, *W. B. Yeats: a study of his readings*, p. 57n.

⁵³ Moore, *Unicorn*, pp. 47ff.

⁵⁴ See introduction to the *Ten Principal Upanishads*, tr. W. B. Yeats and Shri Purohit Swami (London, 1937), p. 11. Later referred to as Yeats-Purohit, *Upanishads*.

⁵⁵ This was in an article in the *Boston Pilot* of February 22, 1890. See W. B. Yeats, *Letters to the New Island* (Harvard, 1934), p. 101.

⁵⁶ Eglinton, *Irish Literary Portraits*, p. 44.

⁵⁷ *Idem*.

⁵⁸ See Yeats's introduction to Yeats-Purohit, *Upanishads*, pp. 7ff.

⁵⁹ In all the volumes of *The Secret Doctrine* the universal symbol of the Lotus is exhaustively discussed.

⁶⁰ Quoted in *Variorum*, p. 811.

⁶¹ *Idem*.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 842.

⁶³ See Sir Monier Williams, *Brahmanism and Hinduism* (London, 1887), pp. 21ff.; Heinrich Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*, Bollingen Series XXVI (New York, 1951); or any other comprehensive book on Hinduism.

Zimmer's book is later referred to as Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*.

⁶⁴ Yeats always translates the Sanskrit term for Self as "Spirit". See "The Holy Mountain" in *Essays and Introductions*, p. 461, and Yeats-Purohit, *Upanishads*.

⁶⁵ W. B. Yeats, "The Pathway" in *Collected Works*, VIII, 193.

⁶⁶ See p. 64.

⁶⁷ A song of the Saint Rāmaprasād (eighteenth century) quoted in Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*, p. 571.

⁶⁸ See *Rg-veda*, 129th hymn of the 10th Maṇḍala; *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, XIV, 4.2.4.; and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 3.

⁶⁹ H. Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization* (New York, 1946), p. 25. Later referred to as Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols*.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 90ff.

⁷¹ "Discoveries" in *Essays and Introductions*, p. 272.

⁷² "To the Rose upon the Rood of Time", *Collected Poems*, p. 35.

⁷³ See Yeats's letter to his father in *Letters to his Son W. B. Yeats and Others*, ed. Hone (New York, 1946), p. 123.

⁷⁴ Eglinton, *Irish Literary Portraits*, p. 48.

⁷⁵ See Ellmann, *The Man and the Masks*, pp. 123ff.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 120. Unp. MS.

¹¹ *Idem.*

¹² Unp. MS. quoted in Moore, *Unp. MS.*, pp. 74-75.

¹³ *Variorum*, p. 747.

¹⁴ Unp. MS. quoted in Ellmann, *Identity of Yeats*, p. 81.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 313-14. Unp. MS.

¹⁶ See Ellmann, *Identity of Yeats*, pp. 80-84.

¹⁷ *Idem.*

¹⁸ This is from an unpublished letter of AE to Sean O'Faolain (April 23, 1929). Copy in possession of Ellmann.

¹⁹ The 1900 version is later referred to as *A*; the other two versions as *B* and *C* respectively.

²⁰ Yeats wrote (June 29, 1905) to John Quinn: "The theosophists are playing the piper as it is to be one of the entertainments at their annual convention. Of course, this does not identify me with them in any way. They get the play from me as might any other manager. . . . I have consented to the performance not because I think it a play I would like to be judged by, or because, think it could be well-played, but because it gives me a chance of making a lot of changes and testing them." Yeats's *Letters*, p. 451.

²¹ Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols*, pp. 48, 50.

²² See notes to *The Wind among the Reeds* (1889), in *Variorum*, p. 808.

²³ *Idem.*

²⁴ Unp. MS. quoted in Ellmann, *Identity of Yeats*, p. 81.

²⁵ *Idem.*

²⁶ See Shri Purohit Swami, *Aphorisms of Yoga* (London, 1938), p. 27. The Swami mentions there that "Lord Buddha took thirteen lives to attain illumination." Later referred to as Swami, *Aphorisms of Yoga*.

²⁷ See Ellmann, *Identity of Yeats*, p. 81.

²⁸ *Idem.*, Unp. MS. of Yeats.

²⁹ See Ellmann, *Identity of Yeats*, pp. 43ff.

³⁰ See Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols*, p. 77.

³¹ See *Variorum*, pp. 808ff.

³² See "He mourns for the Change that has come upon him and his Beloved, and longs for the End of the world." and "The Valley of the Black Pig" in *Collected Poems*, pp. 68 and 73 respectively.

³³ *The Secret Doctrine* II, p. 72.

³⁴ From the copy of an unpublished letter to Sean O'Faolain in Ellmann's collection. Date of the letter is April 23, 1929.

³⁵ *Collected Poems*, p. 242.

³⁶ Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols*, p. 35.

³⁷ See Yeats's note in *Plays and Controversies* (London, 1923), p. 459.

³⁸ See "The Mask of Personality" in Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*, pp. 234ff.

³⁹ Thomas L. Dume suggests that Yeats read this edition in 1914, as soon as it was published. See the unpublished dissertation of T. L. Dume, *William Butler Yeats: a study of his readings* (Temple University, 1950), p. 148. See also Yeats's introduction to Shri Purohit Swami, *Aphorisms of Yoga*, p. 11.

¹⁰⁶ Yeats's *Letters*, p. 469.

¹⁰⁷ From the unpublished letter of George Russell to Sean O'Faolain, that has been quoted before. Copy in possession of Ellmann.

¹⁰⁸ *The Secret Doctrine*, p. 468n.

¹⁰⁹ Unp. MS. of a private diary kept at 18 Woburn Buildings, Euston Road, London. Diary begun July 11, 1889. Copy in possession of Ellmann.

¹¹⁰ See Ellmann, *The Man and the Masks*, p. 181, and *Identity of Yeats*, pp. 91ff.

MACBETH ON THE GERMAN CLASSICAL STAGE

(Schiller's version of Shakespeare's tragedy¹)

WALTHER SCHROETER

IN the history of drama playwrights and theatre directors have always endeavoured to revive plays of former times on the stage of their own time. But to revive a play means also to revise it. Changes, cuts, and insertions have to be made in order to adapt the play to the conditions of the respective stage and the demands of the respective audience. There has always been the problem of the adaptation of a play to the stage. There has always been the question of authenticity. In our case the question is: can Schiller's version² of Shakespeare's tragedy *Macbeth*³ be called a genuine Shakespeare play?

Macbeth ist aus den Fugen: Schmach und Scham,
Dass ich zur Welt, ihn einzurichten, kam.⁴

(Macbeth is out of joint; O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right.)

This is August Wilhelm Schlegel's judgment on Schiller's *Macbeth* for the Weimar stage. With less poetical form, but with feminine temperament, Caroline, August Wilhelm Schlegel's wife, expresses her opinion on Schiller's *Macbeth* in a letter to her husband on May 25, 1801: "Let me not discuss Schiller's *Macbeth*! He is much worse than you dare say, and he truly disgusted us. Can you tolerate, for instance, the fact that he tries to make the witches beings of moral consequence by using the story of the poor soap-boiler from Gellert's or La Fontaine's fable-books? You really should follow him with the genuine translation in the next number of your magazine. He has fully deserved it. He has also completely drawn against him Schelling's indignation. Goethe allows him his merit for once, and certainly is on the whole entirely indifferent towards his products, otherwise he would never tolerate it."⁵

Tycho Mommsen, the editor of the later *Macbeth*-translation by Ludwig Tieck—called Coleridge's version of Schiller's *Wallenstein*

for the English stage the "vengeance" for the wrong Schiller had done to Shakespeare by his version of *Macbeth*.⁶

Schiller himself writes in a letter to his Dresden friend Christian Gottfried Körner on June 16, 1800, when he sends him his *Macbeth*: "It is true that he makes a bad figure against the English original, but after all this is not my fault, but the fault of the language and the many restrictions the stage made necessary."⁷

The controversy between the German romanticists and Schiller concerning the translation of Shakespeare's plays into German is based on the antithesis: play for stage performance (stage-drama; *Bühmendrama*)—play for private reading (book-drama; *Lese-drama*); the antithesis: adaptation of a play to the stage—translation of a play for private reading and understanding. To point it out you can call it the antithesis between the playwright (Schiller) and the poets (the romanticists). This antithesis arose with the modern illusional stage, which came into fashion in the 18th century and which gave other laws to the dramatist than those of the bare Elizabethan stage. There was no room left for the rich poetry and imagery, because there was not so much space left for the spectator's imagination.

The enthusiasm for Shakespeare of the Storm and Stress poets was not primarily inspired by the *playwright* Shakespeare, but rather by Shakespeare the great *philosophical and poetical interpreter of life*. And from him they had derived the right to create dramas for reading rather than for performance on the stage, dramas which in spite of being theatrically effective single pictures cannot be staged with the means of the contemporary theatre (think of Goethe's *Goetz von Berlichingen* or the first edition of Schiller's *Robbers*). This interpretation of Shakespeare is given in Goethe's essay "Shakespeare and no End" ("Shakespeare und kein Ende"), written in the years 1813 to 1816, in which Goethe calls Shakespeare an "epitomator (imitator) of nature" and denies, and this in honour of the poet, that the stage was a worthy place for Shakespeare's genius.

The romanticists also do not want to make any allowances for the practical postulations of the modern stage. In every change or revision of a Shakespearean play they see a grave offence committed against Shakespeare's creative genius. It is the modern opinion that a work of art, once created, must not be touched. This attitude originated in the cult of genius practised in the period of Storm and

Stress. And it was continued by the romanticists' historical view of literature. These scruples did not exist for the dramatists of the various travelling actors' companies of the 18th century. Their task was to provide the company with versions of other authors' plays, especially adapted to the conditions of their stage and the means of their actors. But the romanticists' experiments with the production of uncut and unrevised Shakespeare plays failed. The Berlin production of Schlegel's translation of *Julius Caesar* in 1804 met with no success; whereas the stage version of *Macbeth* given by the theatre director Stephanie, which was crammed with most spectacular scenes, met with enthusiastic applause from the Viennese, the Rostock, and the Danzig audience.

As a theatre director, however, Goethe did not want to leave Shakespeare out of his repertoire, especially not, when after the guest performances of the famous actor Iffland on the Weimar stage in the years 1796 and 1798, the maxim of a misunderstood naturalness was abolished. This maxim had postulated that every actor should perform only in those parts that coincided with his own natural character and individuality. Thus the actor's possibilities on the stage were very limited. Iffland's performances were examples of carefully calculated works of art; he played the most contrasting characters convincingly. Hence Goethe developed the maxim that the actor has to learn how to deny his own personality and how to transform it to such an extent that in certain parts his individuality is not to be recognized. Since that time Goethe had been endeavouring to offer a greater variety in his repertoire. In his letter from Paris to his friends in Germany in 1799, Wilhelm von Humboldt⁸ gave an enthusiastic account of the French theatre: in France the art of acting makes use of all the related arts, of music to please the ears, of painting to please the eyes, of the spectators, whereas on the German stage one was not conscious of the fact that art is not simply an imitation of reality. Inspired by this letter and by their studies of the Greek dramas, Goethe and Schiller developed the bold plan of adapting the great plays of universal drama to the classical idea of humanity and to the classical principle of style, and thus to give the German theatre a homogeneous repertoire. The Weimar stage was to become a German national theatre. This meant cultivation of taste on the part of the audience and creation of suitable plays on the part of the theatre director and playwright. Goethe and

Schiller planned to publish a collection of plays, new ones and adapted old ones, under the title *German Theatre*; every half year there should appear six plays.⁹ The stage should become the realm of poetry; Goethe and Schiller wanted a "poetical theatre". The contents of the plays should illustrate the classical idea of humanity, which for Schiller meant the struggle between fate and freedom in man's action.

To adapt Shakespeare's *Macbeth* to the Weimar stage meant for Schiller to stylize the play's content and form, corresponding to the principle of classical style. The title of Schiller's translation is: "Macbeth, a tragedy by Shakespeare, revised by Schiller for production on the stage of the Weimar court". In this version of *Macbeth* the content of the play has suffered especially decisive changes. Here is a target for the critics, who belong to the circle of the romanticists. These changes have not been made necessary by the conditions of the modern stage only, but especially by Schiller's personal interpretation of the tragedy. The particular value of Schiller's *Macbeth* lies in the fact that it lifts the German stage-version of Shakespeare's play to the level of real dramatic art: This cannot be said of Schiller's predecessors, except, perhaps, of Schröder's adaptations of Shakespearean plays to the Hamburg stage.

Schiller set to work on the translation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in the phase of his development as a playwright, in which he took great pains, theoretically and practically, to give a definition of tragedy for the German stage, which comes near the tragedy of the Greeks. At this time Schiller created his *Wallenstein*. And regarding Schiller's definition of tragedy, one can find many parallels between his *Wallenstein* and his *Macbeth*. In a letter to Goethe on November 28, 1796, Schiller speaks of his work on *Wallenstein*. "Unfortunately," he says, "the proton-pseudos, which makes the catastrophe so awkward for a tragical development, is not yet overcome. Fate itself contributes too little, the hero's own fault too much to his disaster. As a comfort, however, I can take the example of Macbeth, whose ruin is much less caused by fate than by the man himself."¹⁰

Schiller wants to treat the existential question, whether man's action is destined by fate or carried out in personal freedom, on the stage. Schiller wants to put the nemesis-theme of guilt and punishment or of guilt and expiation in the tragedy under the classical idea

of fate. In the classical Greek tragedy a fatal doom, existing outside and above man, induces man to become guilty, though he would not be so in our modern opinion, since he does not know the nature of his action. Thus a genuine tragic conflict arises. For example think of Oedipus's or Orestes's tragic situations. What Schiller wanted to bring on the stage is the *fate tragedy* (Schicksalstragödie) after the Greek pattern. But is an irrational fatalism still possible after Kant's moral law, which says that man is free to decide upon his actions by means of his faculty of intellection, and that man is unfree only in the realm of the phenomena by being subject to the law of causation? Wallenstein's belief in the stars does not suffice for an external motivation of his guilt. His tragedy is reduced to the statement: "The stars of your fate are in your own bosom." Man has a free choice between good and evil, and therefore he is finally responsible for his guilt. And thus after all *Wallenstein* has become a *character tragedy* (Charaktertragödie) rather than a fate tragedy.

What about *Macbeth*? Schiller's intention is to transform the Shakespearean character tragedy into a fate tragedy after the Greek pattern. Therefore it is necessary to free the hero as far as possible from any guilt he had burdened himself with consciously. In the beginning of Schiller's play Macbeth appears as the noble hero with a good character. And then are introduced powers of fate, who by the immensity of their temptation make it impossible for Macbeth to act according to the laws of morality. This part is played by the witches, whom Schiller transformed into classical goddesses of fate. Schiller had become acquainted with the Eumenides of the Greek tragedy by Humboldt's translation of the Orestes-cycle by Aeschylus. He wanted to lift Shakespeare's Weird Sisters to a similarly elevated level. The external powers driving Macbeth towards his fall into guilt are augmented by Lady Macbeth, who in Schiller's play has the character of an evil spirit. Goethe calls her the "superwitch". By defining the character of the witches and of Lady Macbeth in this way, Schiller deprives these figures of their ambiguity and with this, of an essentially fascinating aspect of modern, that is Shakespearean, tragedy.

Let us now have a look at the play itself. Shakespeare's opening scene (I, 1) illuminates with the blaze of lightning the world of demonic powers just for a moment. It is the meeting of the three witches in thunder and lightning:

When shall we three meet again?
In thunder, lightning, or in rain? —
When the hurlyburly's done,
When the battle's lost and won. ---
That will be ere the set of sun. ---
Where the place? —
 Upon the heath. —
There to meet with Macbeth. —
I come Graymalkin! —
Paddock calls. —
Anon! —
Fair is foul, and foul is fair:
Hover through the fog and filthy air.

We may just cast one glance into the agitated powers of the sinister, abysmal, dark elements: thunder, lightning, rain, fog, filthy air, hurlyburly, witches, Graymalkin, Paddock. These are the powers, who destroy the divine order of the world. This scene creates the atmosphere of the night-piece and gives the basic metaphor of the overturned order in nature and in man's life:

Fair is foul, and foul is fair.

Monosyllabic words and alliteration give this line the intensity of a magical incantation. The appeal of this scene lies in its brevity and in its dynamism.

Schiller deprives this scene of both these effective moments. His opening scene is static in its essence. This is already demonstrated by the witches' costumes and movements: Shakespeare's witches "enter" the scene; Schiller's witches are "standing" in the scene, when the curtain rises. They wear buskins and heavy garments, and therefore they can make slow movements only. It is difficult to fancy how they can hover through the air at the end of the scene, although they probably used flying-machines. They are huge, terrible figures with hollow voices. In the first production the witches were played by men. Perhaps Schiller had in his mind Aeschylus's description of the Eumenides, when he created his witches. Aeschylus writes: "Before this man (Orestes) there was a horrifying sight: sleeping women stretched out on chairs, no, these are not women, I call them Gorgons; and they are black and a completely horrible sight." According to Banquo's description Shakespeare's witches are also

a dreadful sight, but they seem to be less severe and static: "So wither'd and so wild in their attire,/That look not like th' inhabitants o' th' earth,/... each at once her choppy finger laying/Upon her skinny lips: you should be women,/And yet your beards forbid me to interpret/That you are so."¹¹ The corresponding verses in Schiller's play run as follows:

.... so grau von Haaren,/So *riesenhaft und schrecklich* anzusehn!/
Sie sehen keinen Erdbewohnern gleich/... den verkürzten Finger/
Bedeutend an die welken Lippen legen./Ihr solltet Weiber sein,
und doch verbietet/Mir euer *männisch* Ansehn euch dafür zu
halten.¹² (Rough translation: Your hair is so grey, you are so
gigantic and terrible a sight, you do not resemble beings of this
world, putting the choppy fingers significantly upon your lips. You
should be women, and yet your manly appearance forbids me to
take you for such.)

Schiller dissolves the sinister darkness of Shakespeare's scene, which is conveyed by the obscure, unknown, and mysterious elements, into clearness, by inserting the verses 10 to 23. These verses contain a self-explanation of the witches. In these verses Schiller wants to lay out the fate tragedy:

Wenn wir mit trüglichem Schicksalswort
Ins Verderben führen den edlen Helden,
Ihn verlocken zu Sünd und Mord.

(The witches recite: When we with treacherous word of fate lead the hero into the disaster, entice him to sin and murder.)

Wir streuen in die Brust die böse Saat,
Aber dem Menschen gehört die Tat.

(We sow the seed of evil into the bosom, but the deed is the man's.)

But in the "enticing" lies already a thought, which is alien to the Greek Eumenides. They do not entice the man to commit an evil deed, but they hunt him as the goddesses of revenge, after the deed is done. Aeschylus's Eumenides say: "And he, who can raise his guiltless hands, will at no time be persecuted by our hatred." And if the Eumenides induce a man to commit a crime, they do it not because of the evil as such, but to take revenge for another crime.

Agamemnon's Eumenides, for instance, challenge Orestes to take revenge for the murder of his father, and after the deed of vengeance is done, his mother's Eumenides hunt him.

Not compatible, moreover, with the Greek idea of fate are the following verses:

Er kann es vollbringen, er kann es lassen

Wenn er sein Herz nicht kann bewahren,
Mag er des Teufels Macht erfahren.

(He can do it or not. If he cannot preserve his heart, he may experience the devil's power.)

Macbeth is free to take the last decision, whether to fall a victim to the witches' temptation or not. Here is the breach in the motivation of the fate tragedy.

The reason the witches give for tempting Macbeth to commit sin and murder, finds a connecting link more easily in classical mythology:

Er ist glücklich, wir müssen ihn hassen.

(He is happy, we must hate him.)

This is the story of the gods being envious of the happy mortals. This envy leads to hatred and to the desire to ruin the happy creature. The powers of hell are especially eager to draw the *good man* away from his first source:

Er ist tapfer, gerecht und gut,
Warum versuchen wir sein Blut?

(He is brave, just, and good; why do we tempt his blood?)

Strauchelt der Gute und fällt der Gerechte,
Dann jubilieren die höllischen Mächte.

(When the good man stumbles and the just man falls, the powers of hell triumph.)

This first scene already makes it clear that Schiller attempts to transform Shakespeare's witches into elevated goddesses after the pattern of the Greek tragedy, and that this attempt has brought

forth peculiarly hybrid beings and cannot be looked upon as having been successful.

The contrast between Shakespeare's and Schiller's witches becomes even more evident in the second witch-scene (Sh. I, 3—Sch. I, 4), where the witches meet on the heath to give an account of their doings. Shakespeare's witches use the language of vulgar women of the mob:

Where hast thou been, Sister?—
Killing swine.

And then follows the story of the sailor's wife, "the rump-fed ronyon", who munched chestnuts, and of the quarrel between the first witch and the sailor's wife. In the witch's plan of revenge appear the magic implements of a maritime people: for instance, the sieve, in which the witch, like a rat without a tail, wants to sail after the sailor. And then there is the pilot's thumb. These allusions to the life of a sailor would have been quite alien to Schiller's audience. In the place of this scene Schiller puts his ballad of the poor fisherman, who lived a happy life, but when he was dazzled by the witches' glittering gold and tempted to sin, he ended by suicide. Schiller's first witch narrates:

Einen Fischer fand ich zerlumpt und arm,
Der flickte singend die Netze
Und trieb sein Handwerk ohne Harm,
Als besäss' er köstliche Schätze,
Und den Morgen und Abend, nimmer müd,
Begrüsst' er mit seinem lustigen Lied.

(I met a fisherman, ragged and poor, who was mending his nets and singing. And he did his work without any harm, as if he owned a precious treasure. And never tired, he greeted the morning and the evening with a jolly song.)

This idyl of cheery and happy poverty provokes the envy of the witches:

Mich verdross des Bettlers froher Gesang,
Ich hatt's ihm geschworen schon lang und lang—

(I felt vexed at the fisherman's happy song, I had sworn to destroy him long before.)

And the witch destroys the fisherman's peace by jugglery of hell:

Und als er wieder zu fischen war,
Da liess ich einen Schatz ihn finden,
Im Netze da lag es blank und bar,
Dass fast ihm die Augen erblinden,
Er nahm den höllischen Feind ins Haus,
Mit seinem Gesange da war es aus.

(And when he went fishing again, I made him find a treasure, there it lay in his net bright and shining so that his eyes were almost blinded. He took the hellish fiend into his house and that was the end of his song.)

The witches triumph:

Er vertraute, der Tor, auf Hexengold
Und weiss nicht, dass es der Hölle zollt!

(He was a fool to believe in the witches' gold, not knowing it pays duty to hell.)

The fisherman cannot recover his former innocence, and finally he deliberately makes an agreement with the fiend:

Da verliess ihn die Gnade, da wich die Scham,
Er ergab sich dem höllischen Feinde.

(Grace and modesty fell away from him, he gave himself up to the hellish fiend.)

In the end he recognizes that he has been cheated:

Und als ich heut will vorüber gehn,
Wo der Schatz ihm ins Netz gegangen,
Da sah ich ihn heulend am Ufer stehn
Mit bleich gehärnten Wangen
Und hörte, wie er verzweifelnd sprach:
Falsche Nixe, du hast mich betrogen.
Du gabst mir das Gold, du ziehst mich nach—
Und stürzt sich hinab in die Wogen.

(And when today I went by the place, where he had found the gold in his net, I saw him standing weeping on the shore, and he had pale cheeks,

And I hear him speak desperately: False mermaid
you cheated me, you gave me the gold, and now you dra
me after you! And with this he throws himself into th
waves.)

The ballad of the poor fisherman is without doubt a parable o
Macbeth's future fate: the poor fisherman is seduced by the illusi
of being rich; the ambitious Macbeth is seduced by the illusion o
being famous and powerful. For Macbeth, too, comes the point o
no return where he makes a deliberate appointment with evil:

Morgen mit dem frühesten
Such' ich die Zauberschwestern auf...
Ich bin so tief in Blut hineingestiegen,
Dass die Gefahr dieselbe ist, ich mag
Zurück schreiten, oder vorwärts gehn.¹³

(Tomorrow in the early morning I shall seek out the Weir
Sisters. I have stepped so deep into blood that the dang
is the same, whether I go back or forward.)

And in the end Macbeth, too, must recognize that he has bee
cheated by the Weird Sisters:

...Verflucht, wer diesen gaukelnden
Dämonen ferner traut, die hinterlistig
Mit Doppelsinn uns täuschen, unserm Ohr
Wort halten, unsre Hoffnung hintergehn!

(Cursed be he, who goes on to trust these juggling demon
who foully cheat us with the double meaning of their won
who keep their promise to our ears, but deceive our hope

But really Macbeth had caused his ruin himself. It is not the doo
of classical fate, but rather the fall of the good man, the story of th
lost son. And with this the transformation from a character traged
into a fate tragedy is not accomplished.

The ballad of the poor fisherman has a special significance fo
the structure of the play. It serves to stress the unity of the pl
Shakespeare uses this witch-scene to create atmosphere. Schill
attempts to bring every detail into a suggestive connection to th
main plot.

As for the scene where the witches meet with Hecate on the heath (Sh. III, 5—Sch. IV, 2), Schiller has combined it with the scene in the cave. The reason for this was probably the saving of one change of scene. In Schiller's play the meeting between the witches and Hecate takes place in the big and dark cavern, in the middle of which the cauldron is already on the fire. By this shifting of place Schiller misses the possibility of mixing a weak Greek tint into the bubbling of the northern witches' kitchen, by placing the scene "at the pit of Acheron". But he does not miss the opportunity to stylize Hecate into the elevated queen of witches, building a bridge to classical mythology.

Why, how now, Hecate? You look angrily?

is Shakespeare's verse. The corresponding verse in Schiller's text runs as follows:

Was ist dir, hohe Meisterin?
Was zürnet unsre Königin?

(What has upset you, high mistress? Why is our queen angry?)

Robert Kilburn Root writes in his "Classical Mythology in Shakespeare" on the figure of Hecate: "The ancients thought of Hecate first as a *moon-goddess*, then as a *divinity of the infernal regions*, and lastly, as a natural development of these two ideas, as a *patroness of witches*. Shakespeare was acquainted with all of these conceptions. Hecate appears as queen of witches. In the course of her long speech she suggests her infernal character by an invitation to meet her "at the pit of Acheron". Her connection with the moon is shown by the lines:

Upon the corner of the moon
There hangs a vap'rous drop profound;
I'll catch it ere it come to ground.

It is typical of Schiller's tendency towards an abstract and rational style of speech that he does not give a German equivalent of this enchanting picture. But in Ludwig Tieck's translation we find a fine poetic picture:

Ein Tropfen, gift'ger Dünste voll,
An einem Horn des Mondes blinkt,
Den fang' ich, eh er niedersinkt.

After her last speech Hecate just disappears behind the cauldron. Thus the song of the spirits in the clouds "Come away, come away . . ." is dropped. Hecate does not hover through the air. By this the Hecate scene has, like the first witch-scene, become more static and less magical.

In the scene around the cauldron, however, there was no connecting link with classical mythology; there was not even the possibility of stylization on an elevated level. It is a northern, heathen witches' kitchen. And here the fact becomes evident that Schiller was not able to give a congenial translation of Shakespeare's witchery. In the beginning Schiller drops the animals' voices, which create the atmosphere of a haunted place:

Thrice the brinded cat has mew'd.
Thrice and once the hedge-pig whin'd.

The equality of structure in the two lines gives these verses the sound of a magical incantation. Alliteration and assonance play an important part, together with the end-rhyme, especially when the ingredients for the witchery are thrown into the cauldron:

Fillet of a fenny snake,
In the cauldron boil and bake; . . .
Witches mummy, maw, and gulf, . . .
Nose of Turk and Tartar's lips;
Finger of birth-strangled babe,
Ditch-delivered by a drab.

Schiller not only does not imitate the alliteration, but he also makes the mistake of putting the magic ingredients into the grammatical plural, thus weakening the value of the single parts and also the appeal of the whole:

Schlangen, die der Sumpf genährt . . . Froschzahn . . . Otter-
zungen . . . Stacheligel . . . Eidechspfoten . . . Eulenflügel . . .

The central formula of the magical invocation is:

Double, double toil and trouble:
Fire, burn, and cauldron, bubble.

Schiller's translation is faint, without magical power; alliteration and assonance are missing; and the vowels are too clear and high:

Rüstig, rüstig! Nimmer müde!
Feuer brenne! Kessel siede!

A more apt German translation has been given by Gottfried August Bürger (it is rather an imitation of Shakespeare's formula than a translation):

Lodre, brodle, dass sich's modle,
Lodre, lohe, Kessel, brodle!

On the whole Schiller's scene in the witches' kitchen is pale against the Shakespearean scene. Schiller's elevated sisters of fate on their buskins do not fit into this kitchen of witches. And what might their dance at the end have looked like? Here there is a definite flaw in the conception.

Up to this point we have approached Schiller's tragedy of *Macbeth* with reference to the part of the *witches*. Let us now have a look at *Macbeth's* part. Shakespeare's hero has a certain ambiguity of character. The crucial point is the significance of the witches' prophecy for him. This decides whether the murder of Duncan is the work of Macbeth's own free will or whether he acted under the higher command of fate. In Schiller's play the witches' prophecy has the weight of the *oracle* in the Greek tragedy, whereas Shakespeare's expressions "oracle", "truth", and "verities" have not the weight of destiny. In Schiller's play the greeting of the witches is the first insinuation and temptation of evil to Macbeth; and it comes from outside. Schiller's hero has been brought by the witches' prophecy to political considerations, which do not exist for Shakespeare's Macbeth, maybe because they had already been present in his thoughts. The hero thinks of Duncan and his sons, who are standing between him and the throne:

Wird uns der blut'ge Mord zum Ziele führen?
Steht dieser Kumberland nicht zwischen mir
Und Schottlands Thron? Und lebt nicht Donalbain?

Für Dunkans Söhne nur und nicht für uns
Arbeiten wir, wenn wir den König töten.¹³

(Will the bloody murder lead us to our aim? Does not the
Cumberland stand between me and Scotland's throne? And
does Donalbain not live? We work for Duncan's sons only,
not for ourselves, if we kill the king.)

The mysterious power of the oracle, however, is working. And in
the fulfilment of its first two promises Macbeth sees a hopeful pledge
of the highest third promise.

In Schiller's play Macbeth goes the way from complete innocence
to complete guilt. In the beginning he is expressly called the "noble
hero" and the "brave, just, and good" man. And he is called so
by the most disinterested beings: the witches.

The poet bestows a fine feature of humanity even on the fallen
angel. When Macbeth learns the news of his queen's death (V, 6),
he can find words only after a long pause of silence. Schiller's hero
shows a more affectionate and a more painful reaction to his Lady's
death than Shakespeare's hero does. But we can judge this only
from the text, and we must be careful, because the actor's own
interpretation on the stage comes in here. And we know that the
text of Shakespeare's plays does not contain many stage-directions.
The interpretation of Macbeth's character depends upon the inter-
pretation of the character of the Weird Sisters. And as Schiller's
sisters of fate left the last decision on his actions to Macbeth, the
openness to temptation and the last responsibility are on his part.
But as the temptation is such a super-human and immense one, we
feel compassion for Macbeth, in spite of his horrible deeds. And
thus the aim of the tragedy is reached: the purification of the pas-
sions by fear and compassion.

One of Shakespeare's scenes has been completely changed in
Schiller's play: the porter scene. Almost all translators of the play
had got stuck at this scene, firstly because of the scene's moral offen-
siveness, secondly because of language difficulties. Schiller has chang-
ed this scene after the principle: turn black into white! The drunk
swearing porter of hell gate is turned into a praying porter at the
gate of heaven. He enters the stage singing a pious hymn:
(I quote Horace Furness's translation of Schiller's verses)¹⁶

The gloomy night is past and gone,
The lark sings clear; I see the dawn,
With heaven its splendour blending,
Behold the sun ascending:
His light it shines in royal halls,
And shines alike through beggars' walls,
And what the shades of night concealed
By his bright ray is now revealed.

When the knocking at the door becomes stronger, the porter admonishes them behind the door to be patient:

A good day begins with the praise of God,
There is no business as urgent as the praying.

And in pious calmness he finishes the second verse of his hymn:

Let songs of praise and thanks be swelling
To God who watches o'er this dwelling,
And with his host of heavenly powers
Protects us in our careless hours,
Full many an eye has closed this night
Never again to see the light.
Let all rejoice who now can raise,
With strength renewed, to Heaven their gaze!

The porter scene in Shakespeare's play as well as Schiller's, offers a contrast to the murder of Duncan in the preceding scene. But the contrast is accomplished by different means. Shakespeare's porter scene is not only a concession to the taste of the audience in the pit, who wanted to see their Punch on the stage, it is also a relief from the nightmare of the murder-scene by wit and laughter. After a strong emotion follows the exercise of wit, which can control the passion. Thus a distance is created, which makes the spectator free to participate in the further action on the stage. Schiller's porter, however, deepens the spectator's emotion by the tragic irony of his innocent and pious behaviour. Guilt and innocence, dark night and the light of day are contrasted. The spectator can only gain a distance from his agitated emotions, if he becomes conscious of the fact that the sancta simplicitas is a bad porter! Schiller's porter had better become a pious hermit. He must be a pretty bad porter, not to notice the nightly proceedings in the castle, when he

knew he had to guard his king! Here the pious innocence in a deeper sense becomes guilt. The reason for *Shakespeare's* porter not doing his duty is that Lady Macbeth had made him drunk. Here is a gap in Schiller's motivation: did Lady Macbeth not see the danger the porter meant to her plan? Did she trust in his foolishness? But then, on the other hand, it is hard to believe that she trusted that fool for her own safety.

The transformation of the porter scene belongs to Schiller's scheme of stylization. After having studied the Greek dramatists' works, Schiller professed the principle that each kind of drama has to be kept pure, that means there must not be a mixture of tragic and comic elements in one and the same drama. And Schiller took offence at Shakespeare's porter scene not only because of its comical, but also because of its obscene character. The Christian and pious porter, however, did not add a classical Greek element to the tragedy.

Finally I want to add some remarks on the production of Schiller's *Macbeth* on the Weimar stage. The few accounts of the production of the play that have come down to us do not result in a complete picture; they can only throw some light on the character of the production, and they can show us, what trifling difficulties of theatre practice the playwright's ideal design encountered.

The first performance of Schiller's *Macbeth* took place in Weimar on May 14, 1800. We have an account of the performance by the Weimar actor Genast;¹⁷ he writes: "Throngs of people crowded outside the theatre, especially in the Jenaische Strasse. The students had set out in big numbers, on feet, on horseback, and in carriages . . . With each act the applause increased. And it was especially Vohs as Macbeth who filled the spectators with enthusiasm." And yet Vohs had very poorly prepared his part; even during the public performance he recited freely invented verses. An account by the actor Becker tells us about the difficulties the repetition of the performance on the Lauchstädt stage, on June 26, had to struggle with. They were short of dummies, and the students, who had come from Halle University, mocked at the "armies". The main encounters were only indicated behind the scene. And the students laughed and hissed at the fighting of the actors Vohs and Graf.

As a melodic accompaniment of the production the producer had taken the music composed by Reichardt for a Halle production of *Macbeth*. But this composition did not have a great effect, mainly

because its best parts are the 'witches' songs, but Schiller's sisters of fate did not sing. And the music, which had been composed for three quickly tripping, mobile, and busy witches, was not suitable for the huge, terrible, hollow-voiced sisters of fate, who in their long and heavy garments could make slow movements only. Moreover the music rather accentuated the unfavourable impression these hybrid figures made on the audience.

Goethe's critical remarks on the production in his letter to Schiller of September 30, 1800, give some illustration of the character of the production, especially of the stage-properties (I give a selection): "1. You should try to disguise the witches' voices better. 3. The witches should have more movement. 4. They should wear longer garments, in order to cover the buskins. 5. Donalbain's sword should have a newer look. 6. Fleance must have another candle-stick. 13. Macbeth as king should wear more magnificent clothes. 14. The table should not be laid out in such a modern style. 18. You have to provide chairs which do not collapse. 20. The children must come higher out of the cauldron, and they have to wear masks and must be decorated more conspicuously. 26. There should be a greater variety of positions for the fighting. 27. The main fighters should have stronger swords."

There have been later revised productions of Schiller's *Macbeth* in October, 1800, and in April and July, 1804. Adolph Müller was one of the spectators of the Lauchstädt production on July 13, 1804; in a letter to his sister Elise he tells about the production: "The colossal actions of *Macbeth* were accompanied by continuous rain and storm on the stage, nevertheless the hero appeared so diminutive. The theatre seemed a puppet-show to me. We have bravely laughed at some scenes."

All these commentaries show us that Schiller's tragedy of *Macbeth* was not an undisputed success on the stage. Anyway the Stuttgart and the Frankfurt theatres purchased the text of Schiller's *Macbeth* immediately after the manuscript was completed. The Mannheim theatre staged their first production of Schiller's play in 1806. And Körner wrote about a pretty successful production of Schiller's tragedy on the Dresden stage in 1804. In the course of the 19th century Schiller's *Macbeth* was driven from the German stage by Tieck's translation, which was to become *the* German *Macbeth* of the century.

¹ Read at Jadavpur University on January 22, 1963.

² Friedrich von Schiller, *Macbeth, ein Trauerspiel von Shakespeare*. Schillers Werke, Nationalausgabe, Band 13, herausgegeben von Hans Heinrich Borchardt. Weimar, Heimann Böhlaus Nachf. 1949.

³ William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. by Kenneth Muir, Arden Edition, London, Methuen and Co. Ltd.

⁴ See Albert Köster, *Schiller als Dramaturg*, Berlin, 1891; p. 123.

⁵ See Albert Köster, p. 122.

⁶ See Albert Köster, p. 124.

⁷ See Schiller-Nationalausgabe, Band 13, p. 364 and Band 30, Letter 198.

⁸ Ibid., Bd. 13, p. 297.

⁹ Cf. the following adaptations of plays to the stage by Schiller: *Egmont* (1796), *Macbeth* (1800), *Nathan der Weise* (1801), *Turandot* (1802), *Phädra* (1805), *Othello* (1805).

¹⁰ Friedrich von Schiller, *Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe*, ed. Phillip Stein. Leipzig Reclam 1944.

¹¹ I, 3, 39-47.

¹² I, 5, 155-163.

¹³ III, 9, 1358ff.

¹⁴ V, 12, 2252ff.

¹⁵ I, 15, 535ff.

¹⁶ Horace Furness, *New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare*, vol. 2.

¹⁷ Schiller-Nationalausgabe, Bd. 13, p. 365.

SHAKESPEARE AND SCHILLER'S *ROBBERS*

DAVID MCCUTCHION

My mind still rests on that trait of eternal boyishness and adventurousness which is the curious complement to Schiller's sublimity.

—THOMAS MANN

SCHILLER wrote *The Robbers* in conscious imitation of Shakespeare, and on the strength of its first performance was acclaimed the future German Shakespeare. Under the inspired teaching of Jakob Friedrich Abel at Karl Eugen's Military Academy, Schiller's mind at seventeen was full of the advanced enthusiasms of his day — the youthful ideals of human 'greatness' and 'genius' as opposed to conformist mediocrity. Abel must have spoken in his lectures as he spoke in his address on the occasion of the annual prize-giving ceremony in 1776:

Who among men more scorns the chains of comfort and good breeding than genius, and leaps beyond their petty laws? You scorn him because he may not stoop to your rules, or does not notice the dust on his coat. Good friends, when a man is soaring in heaven, he forgets the dust on his coat.

Inspired by such sentiments Schiller read the plays of *Sturm und Drang* — Gerstenberg's *Ugolino*, Goethe's *Götz*, Klinger's *Zwillinge*, Leisewitz's *Julius von Tarent*. In the latter play he would have thrilled to Guido's denunciation of an age which uses the heroes of the past as 'shining examples' to muse upon, reading all evening of great lives and great deeds before going quietly to bed:

There they chatter about immortality and freedom and the highest good, looking more solemn than Marcus Porcius Cato with the bellyache, and yet all the chatter has achieved nothing more than a gentle motion of the chatterer's bowels, *eine sanfte Leibesbewegung des Schwätzers*.

But between 1776-7 Schiller discovered Shakespeare: a world of greatness, passion and scorn far more compulsive than the surface emotionalism of the *Stürmer und Dränger*. Again it was through

Abel that the revelation took place, and Abel has given us an account of the effect on Schiller of first hearing Shakespeare. Abel, lecturing on moral philosophy, had quoted from *Othello* in order to illustrate the struggles of conflicting passions in the human heart, and later recalled: 'Schiller was all ears, every line on his face expressed the feelings rushing through him, and no sooner was the lecture over than he urged me to lend him the book, and from now on he read and studied it with uninterrupted eagerness.'

There are many reports of the passionate dedication with which Schiller gave himself up to Shakespeare — how he even sacrificed his favourite dishes in return for permission to keep the borrowed volumes longer. The 1770's had seen a flood of Shakespeare translations and adaptations, from Herder's blank verse passages to various frenchified and vulgarised versions, but it was the Wieland translations of 1762-6 that Schiller mainly read, though the Eschenberg improved version was also becoming available (1774-82), and the so-called Mannheim Shakespeare, another reworking of Wieland, appeared between 1778-83 — exactly contemporary with the *Robbers* period. In short it was the period of greatest Shakespeare enthusiasm — discovery and ill-digested assimilation — which preceded the more painstaking critical assessment and qualifications of the Romantics. We can be sure that when Schiller was writing his play between 1777-80, he knew all the major plays, and especially *King Lear* which in 1790 he reported having 'once' read sixteen times in succession. Echoes and parallels from *Lear*, *Othello*, *Timon*, *Macbeth*, *Richard III*, *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*, to mention only the most evident, may be found in *The Robbers*. From Schiller's Mannheim speech of 1784 we learn that *Timon* especially impressed him: in none of his plays, he tells us, did Shakespeare 'stand before him more truthfully, speak louder or more eloquently to his heart, or teach him more wisdom, *Lebensweisheit*.' And for the rest of his life Schiller was to turn to Shakespeare as a source of wisdom and dramatic art, unlike Goethe who said in his old age he had been glad to get Shakespeare off his back, *dass ich ihn mir vom Halse schaffte* by writing *Götz* and *Egmont*: 'He is too rich and too powerful. A productive nature may only read one of his plays a year, or else go to ruin, *wenn sie nicht an ihm zugrunde gehen will*.'

The writings in which Schiller speaks of Shakespeare all date from after the composition of *The Robbers*, but it is not difficult

to imagine what Schiller sought to imitate from his master. His enthusiasm must have been like that of the young Goethe in his Shakespeare oration of 1771:

Shakespeare, my friend, if you were still with us, I could live nowhere but with you; how gladly I would play the role of Pylades to your Orestes...

Goethe speaks of the 'colossal size' of Shakespeare's characters, and their truth to nature: the French, and Germans infected by French taste — even Wieland himself — cannot stomach Shakespeare's characters, 'And I cry: Nature, Nature! nothing so like Nature as Shakespeare's men.' The word 'colossal' reminds us of Karl Moor's cry against his 'ink-blotting century', *das schlappe Castraten-Jahrhundert*: 'The law has never yet formed a great man, but freedom breeds forth colossi and extremes, *brütet Kolosse und Extremitäten aus*.' But more than by the colossal size of Shakespeare's characters, Schiller was impressed by his psychological insight — *Natur* again, his understanding of human nature. This fascination with motive, the wiles of mental complexity, distinguishes Schiller's from Goethe's early debt to Shakespeare. In the first, unpublished Preface to *The Robbers* Schiller, with Shakespeare in mind, puts the drama before the novel or epic because it 'digs deeper into the soul, cuts more sharply into the heart,' surprises (*ertappt*) the soul so to speak 'at its most secret operations.' And so in the published Preface, speaking of Franz, he declares: 'Vice is here disclosed in all its inner workings... I have attempted to set down an accurate living model (*Conterfei*) of this kind of monster, to dissect the full mechanism of his systematic vice (*Lastersystem*),' concluding: 'I think I have hit it off, *die Natur getroffen*.'

But the Preface also reveals a radical divergence from Shakespearean art: his play is to be a vindication of morality, a pulpit *exemplum*, its aim 'to overthrow vice and avenge religion, morality and social laws (*bürgerliche Gesetze*) on their enemies' — these enemies being not only the eighteenth century rationalists and materialists, but also the wits who mock the Holy Word: he will 'deliver up these despisers of Scripture (*Schriftverächter*) to the horror of the world' by associating them with the most infamous villains. Accordingly he promises his drama 'a rightful place among the moral

books' for 'vice receives its deserts and virtue emerges victorious.' This siding with virtue in passionate indignation against vice contrasts strongly with Shakespeare's objectivity — that 'coldness', 'insensitivity', as Schiller called it when he later put Shakespeare among the 'naive' poets — those realists who accept the world for good or bad — as against the 'sentimental' poets like himself who yearn for the ideal. He admits he worshipped Shakespeare without loving him, offended by his comic interruptions at moments of greatest pathos, *wo das Herz so gern stillgestanden wäre*. So by a strange incongruity Schiller's deeper allegiance is to the eighteenth century neo-classical drama which he scorned, and we are reminded of Gottsched's formula for writing a play:

First choose an instructive moral thesis as a basis to the whole composition... Then think of some event from which an action arises which concretely illustrates your thesis.

From the Preface we might almost expect Schiller's play to be nearer an eighteenth century drama than to Shakespeare, a preoccupation with 'poetic justice' and moral law depriving the play of its vigour as happened in Dryden's version of *Antony and Cleopatra*; and in fact Schiller confesses in his essay *On Naive and Sentimental Poetry* that 'I was not capable of understanding nature at first hand. I could only endure her picture as reflected by reason and set right by rules, and for that the sentimental French and German poets of the years 1750 to about 1780 were the best examples, *die rechten Subjecte*.' Astonishing confession for one who in the first Preface to *The Robbers*, had scorned the French rhetoric which at a crisis declaims 'O rage! O désespoir!' contrasting this with the convincing realism of Macduff's 'He has no children'; and he who now called Shakespeare 'cold' had then denounced the French heroes and heroines as 'rarely more than ice-cold observers of their own rage, wise professors of their passion.' But of course Shakespeare's *characters* are not cold, and what Schiller aimed to do in *The Robbers* was to combine warmth of moral commitment as an author with the fierce passions of the Shakespearean heroes. The result is that his passion for the moral law competing with his admiration for the passion of his heroes leads to a genuine moral conflict with the potentiality of great tragedy — a potentiality finally undermined not so much by his

desire to affirm the moral law, as by his sentimental inheritance from the eighteenth century, a desire to indulge in emotion rather than purge it.

It is surprising how close to Shakespeare Schiller actually gets. The 'sceptical' Shakespeare is not so morally indifferent as is sometimes made out: the difference essentially is that Shakespeare accepts tragedy as an inevitable part of life whereas Schiller protests; but both assert a moral order in the universe. / As Goethe said of Shakespeare in 1771: 'his plays turn about the hidden point (which no philosopher has yet seen or determined) where the idiosyncrasy of our self (*das Eigentümliche unseres Ichs*), our so-called freedom of will, clashes with the necessary course of the whole.' It is the 'Will versus World' (or freedom versus necessity) formula, so familiar in Romantic theorising, and beset with ambiguity, for as Schiller says of his here: / we both 'abominate and love, admire and pity' him, *verabscheuen und lieben, bewundern und bedauern*. / It is interesting that neither Goethe nor Schiller in their *Sturm und Drang* period could be content with Shakespeare's detachment from the world spectacle, yet developed in directions opposite from each other: Goethe towards reconciling passion and the world order, Schiller towards emphasising the tragic discrepancy. /

/ In Shakespeare evil is inevitable and disastrous, the doom-in-the-character brought to fruition by circumstances, which no foresight can divert: self-knowledge comes too late. And like the effect of a huge disturbance with distant repercussions, evil must play itself out, involving both guilty and innocent, storms in the heart and storms on the heath, until finally equilibrium is restored — the cycle begins anew with Edgar, Fortinbras. The individual will makes a breach in the moral universe, and all nature protests — when *Macbeth* breaks the laws of hospitality and loyalty:

The night has been unruly: where we lay,
Our chimneys were blown down; and, as they say,
Lamentings heard i' the air; strange screams of death,
And prophesying with accents terrible
Of dire combustion and confus'd events
New hatch'd to the woeful time. The obscure bird
Clamour'd the livelong night: some say the earth
Was feverish and did shake.

The doctor comments on Lady Macbeth's mysterious illness: 'Unnatural deeds/Do breed unnatural troubles...' Duncan's 'gash'd stabs look'd like a breach in nature/For ruin's wasteful entrance.' Horrible portents precede the assassination of Caesar: graves yawn, a lioness whelps in the streets, ghosts shriek and squeal. The accumulation of evil affects the whole body politic, all society, gathering like an abscess to a head, as in *Hamlet* where the time is out of joint, or *Lear*: 'Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide: in cities mutinies; in countries discord; in palaces treason; and the bond cracked between son and father.' In Shakespeare social morality (the laws of kinship, hospitality, all that binds men in social order) are part of the natural order — *man's* natural morality as opposed to that of the beasts and Caliban. The great terror is that man shall cease to be man, shall become 'a beast that wants discourse of reason', shall sink to Caliban.

But Rousseau saw things in a very different way: society and reason have become the enemies of natural man: Caliban was not evil but good. Karl Moor is not merely a colossus of strength and passion asserting his will against the universe, but he is also a good man forced into evil by the corrupt society into which he has been born. And not merely corrupt — petty, timid. For the medieval world, for Dante, passion was the deadly enemy of morality (= God's law, and passion was the work of the devil). But two centuries of rational morality and increasing refinement of manners had revealed the inhibiting effects of social morality, the deadening mediocrity of conformism. / In the minds of Goethe and Schiller, as in all minds from Rousseau to Nietzsche and beyond, there is an unhappy tension between *social* morality and *vital* morality: nurture sacrifices nature, social order is achieved at the cost of the vital instincts. The *Stürmer und Dränger* are hopelessly confused in their attitude to society: on the one hand they are full of eighteenth century revolutionary politics and want to reform it, on the other they cry: Freedom! and reject it out of hand. Goethe and Schiller are typically ambiguous: as young men both set out full of contempt for middle class life, *das Bürgerliche* — its strait-laced timidity, its pedantry and materialism, lack of imagination, complacent self-sufficiency: all those qualities Goethe so despised in his father, who used to collect his son's half-finished sketches and draw neat margins round them, who employed a manservant who was also

a tailor to save clothes-making expenses. Yet like Wilhelm Meister with the travelling players, Goethe hated dissoluteness and mess. His attitude to figures such as Albert in *Werther* or Brackenberg in *Egmont* reveals his awareness of their good qualities, but conviction of their inadequacy.

Sometimes, as in the opposition of court and castle in *Götz* or Wahlheim and the embassy in *Werther*, Goethe repeats Rousseau's antithesis: social = bad, natural = good, but he could not remain long content with so neat a formulation. He evolved his theory of the daemonic and the double standard of morality, according a creative purposeful role to those passions and cataclysms which in Shakespeare lead to tragic disaster. Following Herder's theory of God in History, he conceives men like Napoleon, who are filled with the murderous ambitions of a Macbeth, as instruments of historical change, trampling law to create new law, overcoming the stagnation of existing society to create a new society: Shakespeare's world is static, unhistorical, Goethe's dynamic. The 'daemonic' force that operates through such men as Napoleon 'constitutes a power which, if not directly opposed to the moral world order, nevertheless cuts across it (*eine der moralischen Weltordnung, wo nicht entgegengesetzte, doch sie durchkreuzende Macht*), so that one might be compared to the woof and the other to the weft.' And this power, 'which may manifest itself in anything organic or inorganic (*in allem Körperlichen und Unkörperlichen*) and is most strikingly expressed in animals' (we may think of Blake's tiger), is a restatement of the *Sturm und Drang* cult of energy. Egmont, with reference to whom Goethe formulated his theory of *das Dämonische in Dichtung und Wahrheit*, is really a misrepresentation of it, for Egmont is too attractive, too idealised a romantic hero, bold, generous and free, whereas Goethe admits that daemonic men 'are not always the most excellent in mind or talents, and rarely recommend themselves by goodness of heart.' Faust comes nearer, crushing Gretchen and her family, or Baucis and Philemon, and allied in his creative endeavours with brutality and greed — the 'three mighty men' from Samuel who join him on the battlefield and are still there in his new settlement — not to mention the devil himself: 'a part of that power which always wills evil and creates good.'

Not that Goethe advocated unrestrained passion. In reaction against *Sturm und Drang* and under the influence of Frau von Stein,

he had turned to the eighteenth century ideal of moral restraint enshrined in such figures as Iphigenie or the Princess in *Tasso*, and had advocated 'nobility' and 'goodness' in such a poem as *Das Göttliche*. Promethean defiance had given place to humble acceptance of 'the limits of humanity', *Grenzen der Menschheit*: 'For no man should reach up to the gods...' Ideally, as in *Wilhelm Meister*, Goethe proposes a compromise between *das Bürgerliche* and *das Dämonische*: Nathalie continues the ethical ideal of Iphigenie while Lothario represents the daemonic energy — Jarno contrasts Lothario with the busy little Medicus: 'Lothario might possibly destroy in one day what he had built up over years: but Lothario might also impart to others in one moment the strength to restore a hundredfold what had been destroyed.' The book suggests a balance: man's dynamic force and woman's moral sensitivity. It was the great ambition of Goethe's classicism, his *Humanität*, to achieve this balance of instinct and reason, energy and form: the poise of the *Roman Elegies*. Or as Jarno tells Wilhelm: 'A man is not happy until he has set his own limits to his unconditioned striving' — create your own necessity in freedom.

This is far removed from Shakespeare and Schiller, the world of conflict and evil. It is true that Schiller's ideal of grace and dignity, *Anmut und Würde*, as embodied in a figure like the Queen in *Don Carlos* is close to Goethe's Iphigenie or the Princess, but Schiller could never achieve the serenity of quite believing in such figures for him there was always *der Riesenkampf der Pflicht* — the conflict of passion with the moral law. He has all the 'infinite resignation' of the moral idealist in an imperfect world. And for all his youthful admiration for strength and energy, Schiller was never tempted to vindicate passion in the name of any daemonism that cut across the universal moral law, categorically binding all men. In one sense Goethe's acceptance of the facts of existence — the polarity of good and evil, necessary facets — brings him closer to Shakespeare than Schiller could get, even though as we have seen evil is irredeemably tragic for Shakespeare whereas Goethe the optimist contrives to make evil work for ultimate good. Yet Shakespeare's position is anomalous: he is full of the spirit of Renaissance dynamism, but his moral world order is still the medieval one — the Chain of Being and Corresponding Planes so clearly set forth in Professor Tillyard's well-known book. Generally in his plays last

and violence bursting through this moral order precipitate disaster, and we sigh with relief when the abscess is cleansed and order restored. He shares the Elizabethan horror of Machiavellism, and in a figure like Hamlet embodies the moral despair that followed on Renaissance confidence. But in one play Shakespeare comes surprisingly close to the romantic cult of vitality: *Antony and Cleopatra*. Here the *Stürmer und Dränger* might have found a contempt for 'the cold Octavius' and housewifely Octavia equivalent to their own for bourgeois mediocrity, and an exultation in passion close to their hearts. But it is hardly necessary to point out that the love of Antony and Cleopatra is far removed in its brutal realism ('I found you as a morsel, cold upon/Dead Caesar's trencher...') from the idyllic romantic love of an Egmont for a Clärchen. Once again Rousseau and Klopstock, a shift of sensibility, have undermined Renaissance vigour and realism.

Schiller the moralist is fascinated by two themes in particular of Shakespearean drama: passion and deceit (those supreme enemies of moral law) — for the passion he feels an ambiguous admiration, for the deceit an obsessive horror. The two aspects are represented in *The Robbers* by Karl and Franz, the noble and the wicked villain, the criminal from warmth of heart and the criminal from cold calculation. Schiller tells us in the Preface that Karl Moor, whose criminality springs from his greatness of soul (*den das äusserste Laster nur reizet um der Grösse willen*), who is attracted by the dangers not the gains of lawlessness, excites the same mixture of admiration and horror as Milton's Satan, the Medea of the ancient dramatists, or Shakespeare's Richard III. He might turn out a Catiline or a Brutus: in the event he becomes a Catiline to end a Brutus, and all because of this 'fullness of strength which bursts beyond all laws, *alle Gesetze übersprudelt*.' The Shakespearean models are such titans as Macbeth, Lear, Othello, Richard, men who stand alone challenging the gods, men whose very presence radiates a compulsive energy whether for good or evil. Beyond them, with less imaginative impact, stand the heroes of Plutarch — those whom Karl himself reads about, with Brutus and perhaps Antony foremost. Like Othello, Karl Moor is inflamed with a passionate righteousness, and all too readily believing himself betrayed, takes the law into his own hands; good at heart, trustful, generous, like Brutus he is led into

crime by lesser men, a victim of his own virtue. Karl does not become a robber for wealth or power: his one-third share of the loot he gives to the poor; his task is retribution (*mein Handwerk ist Wiedervergeltung*), and when he has slain the corrupt advocate for instance, he disappears into the woods: 'I've done my part. Plundering is your affair.'

But unlike Brutus, who is a stoic rational man, Karl is not drawn into outlawry solely for the sake of justice: at the source of his decision to become a robber chief is the impulse of absolute personal freedom — the unbridled will. His father's letter, however deeply it shocks him, provides an excuse vindicating his deepest wishes. Has he not already told us that freedom breeds colossi? And now in the midst of a ferocious misanthropy inspired from Timon, he drops all pretence of returning to his father and a law-abiding life: 'The scales drop from my eyes — what a fool I was wanting to go back into the cage! — My spirit thirsts for deeds, my breath for freedom! And when the scales really do drop from his eyes, when he has experienced the chaos and isolation of freedom, his rage in the forest echoes Lear's on the heath:

Look here! look here! The laws of the world have become a throw of dice, nature's bond is torn apart, ancient chaos is let loose, the son has slain the father.

Karl Moor does not correspond to any single Shakespearean hero — part Brutus, part Othello, with echoes of Lear, Richard, Macbeth, even a Hamlet unconstrained by doubt who seeks to set the world right by murder — but models for Franz are much more clearly in evidence: Edmund, Richard, Iago. In all his plays Schiller was to share with Shakespeare an obsession with deceit, the good man's terror and bewilderment at the web of treachery, Machiavellian betrayal, where seeming replaces being, where one may 'smile and smile and be a villain.' So *The Robbers* opens with Franz deceiving his father: he has written a letter purporting to come from a correspondent in Leipzig with news of Karl's dissolute life and debts, and now feigns reluctance to show it for fear of disturbing his father's health. The scene almost exactly parallels Edmund's betraying his brother in *Lear*, where Edmund has written a letter in his brother's hand suggesting they murder their father, and then allows his father to surprise him hastily putting it away. Like Edmund Franz puts

on a great show of unwillingness and regret, with suggested exonérations, all the time 'innocently' incriminating his brother the more by insidious revelations, the whole backed up by quotations from the Bible and references to his own conscience. Like Edmund Franz exults over the foolishness of the old man as soon as he's alone. The classic instance of this sowing the seeds of doubt is of course Iago with Othello, in comparison with whose devilish innocent cunning Franz is merely theatrical.

But Schiller we remember was to reveal all the inner motivations of Franz's viciousness, and here again he leans heavily on Shakespeare. Like Edmund Franz is a disfavoured son, not a bastard but second in line for the inheritance. But whereas Shakespeare makes Gloucester love both sons equally, Schiller's Karl is the *Schosskind* and Franz generally disliked. And whereas Edmund is equal in body and mind to his brother, Franz is hateful — with cold hands, 'a Laplander's nose, a Moor's mouth, and Hottentot eyes.' This brings him close to Richard III 'cheated of feature by dissembling Nature,/Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before my time/Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,/And that so lamely and unfashionable/That dogs bark at me as I halt by them.' Like Edmund and Richard from resentment and frustration, Franz sets himself outside the bounds of social morality: they will use their wits to get what fortune has denied them, and the means — dissimulation: 'When he fawns, he bites,' as Queen Margaret says of Richard. All are great manipulators ('Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous . . .' — Richard), exulting in their superior cunning, full of contempt for the lesser creatures whose destinies they rule. Iago indeed seems less motivated by resentment than by the sense of power he may gratify by leading Othello on. Both Edmund and Franz vindicate themselves by appeal to amoral natural law ('Thou, Nature, art my goddess . . .' — Edmund), and rationalize away conscience, love, honour, ties of kinship. Richard murders his brother, his nephews and his wife; Edmund seeks to murder his brother and father; Franz would if he dared. Shakespeare is full of the dreadful supposition that man may be but an animal, begetting and begotten like goats (both Edmund and Franz are obsessed with lust), matter without spirit — as Franz puts it, merely mud: 'Man rises from mud (*aus Morast*), wades a while in mud, makes mud, and returns to mud, ending up as a bit of dirt sticking to the shoes of his great grandson.' Like Shakespeare Schiller

fears reason unchecked by moral feeling, but he has not only Machiavelli but the eighteenth century materialists as examples. Thus Franz, like La Mettrie, compares man to a machine, and looks upon his father's mind as a complicated piece of mechanism. And he uses reason to justify murder (as more deliberate and purposeful than procreation). Here is a Machiavellian morality of the strongest, meaning the most cunning, the most selfish: 'He is a fool who thinks against his own advantage' (Franz). Or as Richard puts it: 'Richard loves Richard, that is I am I.' Does spirit exist? is there an absolute moral law? is man different from the animals? — the same metaphysical problems are posed by both Shakespeare and Schiller.

In both Shakespeare and Schiller the criminal from passion and the criminal from cunning meet their downfall, the one tragically, the other unlamented: the moral law is superior to both. As far as the villains are concerned, their treachery plays itself out: murder follows murder till they themselves are murdered (Richard, Macbeth), or they ride the crest of deceit till stranded and exposed (Iago, Edmund, Franz). But in the tragedy of Karl, Schiller echoes a familiar Elizabethan motif: the revenger must die ('Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord'). By associating with robbers and murderers, with whatsoever good intentions, Karl becomes involved in their guilt. He cannot dissociate himself from Spiegelberg, whose men attack a lonely convent by night and rape the nuns. In fact Spiegelberg, who represents mere criminality without either the idealism of Karl or the intelligence of Franz, grotesquely parodies the *Sturm und Drang* language of Karl: 'Great thoughts dawn in my soul! Great plans ferment in my creative brain. Accursed sluggardliness (shaking his head) which up to now has kept my strength in chains, barred and bound my prospects! I awaken, feel who I am — who I must become!' Schiller thereby reveals a certain critical detachment from the posturing of dramatists like Klinger. Gradually Karl comes to realize his guilt, especially after the rescue of Roller. This Robin Hood exploit cost the lives of eighty-three innocent citizens when his followers rampaged through the town — and not even fit and able men (potential enemies), but the sick and crippled, children, pregnant women, housewives, all those who could not go to the execution of Roller. Karl may banish Schusterle who threw a child into flames, but he cannot banish his conscience:

How this deed humbles me! It has poisoned my finest achievement! — There stands the boy red with shame and laughed to scorn before the eye of heaven, who presumed to play with Jupiter's club, and knocked down pigmies, when he was supposed to be shattering titans.

Karl learns that he can only take upon himself the role of revenger (*Rache ist mein Gewerbe*, he had said) at the cost of peace, security and love. He becomes the outcast, *der Verstossene*, and realizes there is no return to innocence — he is bound for life in crime to the robber band, as is symbolised by his oath. He is 'the lost son' as the first title of the play called him. He advises Kossinsky, another good man seeking justice like himself, not to join him: 'Either you must be a superior man (*ein höherer Mensch*), or you are a devil.' Like Franz he is drawn deeper and deeper into the labyrinth of his physical and spiritual isolation:

Who guarantees I'm right? — — everything so dark — labyrinth of confusion — no way out — no guiding star — suppose it were all over with this last breath — over, like an empty puppet show — then why this burning hunger for happiness? Why the ideal of an unattained perfection? . . .

And so the tragic climax is prepared. For one ecstatic speech, in the arms of his Amalia ('She forgives me, she loves me! I am pure as the heaven's ether, she loves me!'), he believes that happiness may yet be his (love redeeming all), then like Nemesis the robbers step forward to remind him of his oath: 'Think on the Bohemian forests! . . .' And so to the bitter conclusion: 'A great sinner can never return,' and the final grand pronouncement: 'Two men like me would destroy the entire structure of the moral world.' The sacrifice of Amalia frees him from his debt to the robbers. One last sacrifice remains: of himself — to society 'to reconcile the offended laws and restore the order which has been disturbed, *die misshandelte Ordnung wieder heilen*.' It is the age-old theme of crime, revenge and expiation, from Aeschylus and the Greeks via Elizabethan revenge tragedy. In formula at least Schiller reaches tragic heights.

Unfortunately his hero never attains tragic stature: he is no Macbeth but a sentimental student, and where he rages against mankind before joining the robbers, his raging is less the magnificent

indignation of Lear than adolescent tantrums: 'Is that a father's trust? Is that love for love? I would like to be bear and stir up the bears of the North against this murderous race — repentance and no pardon! — Oh I would like to poison the ocean ...' The exploits which must justify his denunciation of bourgeois timidity amount to no more than a student rag and a few drinking parties. Karl Moor, like the other *Sturm und Drang* heroes, is the voice of late eighteenth century German student youth, the expression of their dreams and frustrations: the beery histrionics are accurate enough, but the whole robber episode is an unreal projection of Schiller himself into situations which his limited experience had not fitted him to imagine — not in short the Bohemian forests where bands of real robbers were actually roaming at the time he wrote the play, but the world of Robin Hood. It is to Schiller's credit that he does not sentimentalize his robbers (as Victor Hugo does in *Hernani*) — insisting rather on their brutality and greed as part of his theme — but this only makes it the harder to imagine Karl as their leader. For Karl is an idealized portrait of German youth, a kind of youthful Götz, a combination of schoolboy heroism and eighteenth century sensibility. The models for Karl and Franz in Schubart's story from which Schiller took his theme, are not Edgar and Edmund, or Othello and Iago, but Tom Jones and Master Blifil. Not Fielding however, with his robust common sense, but Rousseau and Klopstock are the really determining influence: tears and the pure heart. Karl has as little emotional control (or desire for it) as Rousseau himself: he stamps his feet with rage, foams at the mouth, rushes about the stage, kisses the earth on returning to his native Franconia — all those theatrical gestures which Hamlet (Shakespeare's student hero) so despised. He is given to solemn oaths and melodramatic bravado: 'Away, away from me! Is your name not man? are you not born of woman? — Out of my sight, you with the human face!' Hamlet's complex sardonic mind is a mystery which still fascinates us today, whereas Karl's 'openness, which mirrors his soul in his eyes', exhausts our interest at a single performance.

Apart from this self-righteous posturing (after all Othello postures and is self-righteous, with an open heart), the really insidious influence undermining Karl is the *pathos* of eighteenth century sensibility, the continuous appeal to our pity or protective affection. None of Schiller's characters attain the self-sufficient unapproachable maturity of Shakespeare's characters: they are all too vulnerable, too

pathetic, soft at the core. Karl as a boy we are told was admired not only for his 'manly courage' which had him climbing oak trees, but for his 'tenderness of feeling'; not only for his 'fiery spirit', but for his love of beauty. At the castle hangs his birthday portrait, painted by Amalia in a jasmin bower, the expression smiling and mild. And this tender creature is out in the Bohemian forests! The happiness he yearns for, that 'unattained perfection', is domestic felicity: 'In the shadows of my father's grove, in the arms of my Amalia, I am drawn to a nobler contentment' — so he had replied to Spiegelberg's initial proposals of banditry. Is he changed by his life in the forest? Not a bit of it: long after he has settled down to a life of stabbing advocates and throttling friars, he blushes 'fiery red' at the mention of love. On a summer's evening in a pastoral setting of hills and vineyards, when the hard day's hold-ups are done, he lies beneath a tree as the sun goes down ('So dies a hero'), and philosophises in the meditative melancholy mode: how beautiful the world is, all things pass, the hailstorm falls on rich and poor alike ... He is nostalgic for his childhood, the time he could not sleep before he said his prayers: 'My innocence! my innocence! ...' If only he could return into his mother's womb, be reborn a beggar. He rests his head on the breast of the bandit Grimm: 'Brother! brother!' He wipes the face of another bandit who had brought his captain water, and almost broken his neck climbing down to get it. They recall the day of the battle in the forest when they were surrounded: 'Yes, children,' says Karl, 'that was a warm afternoon ...' The afternoon when they had refused to buy their freedom by giving him up. In this mood Karl makes his solemn oath never to leave them — the oath of such momentous consequences. The whole scene is a disconcerting mixture of romantic sad earnestness in a setting of stage banditry.

Disconcerting — but typical of the play, this contradiction between its violence and its sentimentality: on the one hand what H. B. Garland calls its 'cat-tearing bombast', or the coarse medical student realism of Karl's early speeches, on the other the 'flowery language' (*die blumigte Sprache*) which Schiller himself later condemned: 'Language and dialogue should be more even, and on the whole less poetic.' Not only Karl, but Franz also is a schoolboy at heart, collapsing piteously at the end (contrast Edmund, Iago). And Amalia, as no critic fails to point out, is a mere abstraction, a dream image like Rousseau's Julie: generous, pure, faithful unto death; as Schiller

himself commented: 'The girl has been reading too much Klopstock, *hat mir zu viel in Klopstock gelesen.*' Too many scenes are permeated with a lyrical sweet sadness: 'The leaves fall from the trees — and my autumn has come' murmurs Karl after Spiegelberg has been discovered — and killed — stirring up mutiny, and he calls for his lute: 'Soon — soon all will be fulfilled.' Of course Shakespearean precedent can be found for such moments of inward withdrawal, with or without the lute, and in fact the song which Karl sings is a dialogue between Brutus and Caesar, but Shakespeare's Brutus, even when Lucius is playing to him, never loses the authority of his presence and strength of mind. Brutus may regret the past, but never indulges in the self-pity of Karl, who regards himself as 'a poor fugitive' cut off from happiness. The emotion of the lute scenes is not Shakespearean, but that of the Ossian reading in *Werther* — soft deliquescent reveries on death. Brutus and Caesar sound like Ryno and Alpin, and when Amalia sings about Hector (the song she and Karl used to sing together), she remarks: 'Yes, it is sweet, sweet and heavenly to be rocked in the sleep of death by the song of the beloved — perhaps one goes on dreaming in the grave — one long eternal endless dream of Karl.' When later Karl and Amalia again sing the song together in the garden, the song echoes the mood and imagined situation of the lovers exactly as the Ossian extracts do in *Werther*, and the emotion reaches fever pitch as Karl, like Hector, leaves his *teures Weib* and dashes off to war.

Now pathos is fatal to the tragic effect, yet pathos is irresistible to Schiller. We have already seen how he hates the way Shakespeare punctures with comedy and vulgarity the climaxes of emotional tension 'where the heart so longs to linger.' When Schiller later comes to formulate his tragic theories, he speaks not only of *Schrecken* (terror), but *Rührung*, which might be translated 'pity', but actually means the emotion of being moved or touched — what the French call *attendrissement* — tender pity — the emotion which is so important to Rousseau. And in laying such stress on sentimental pity Schiller not only follows eighteenth century sensibility, but in particular his great forbear Lessing, who had made pity the dominant tragic emotion — the kind of pity we feel for the heroine of a *bürgerliches Trauerspiel*, whose fate can hardly inspire tragic terror. With the return of Karl in disguise to his home and beloved, the opportunities for heart-rending scenes are multiplied, especially where dependent

on the highly-charged theme of impossible-love — that love so perfect in its union of twin souls from the elite of sensibility, that it cannot possibly be realized on earth (Klopstock: *To Fanny*; Goethe: *Werther*). In the second scene of the fourth act, Karl, returning after so many years to his home castle, is being shown round the portrait gallery by Amalia who does not recognize him: he finds his father's portrait and wipes his eyes.

Karl: A god-like man!

Amalia: You seem to feel great sympathy for him.

Karl: Oh an excellent man — and is he really dead?

Amalia: Dead! like our dearest joys. (gently clasping his hand)
Dear Count, no happiness ripens on this earth.

Karl: True, true. — and have you already had this sad experience? You can hardly be twenty-three years old.

Amalia: And yet have had it. Everything lives, to die in sadness. We take an interest in something, we gain something, only to lose it again in sorrow.

Karl: And have you lost something?

Amalia: Nothing! Everything! Nothing! — let us walk on, Count.

Then of course Karl points to his own portrait, and Amalia weeps, then rushes out: 'She loves me! she loves me!'

The same technique is exploited in the fourth scene. This time Amalia is discovered in the garden weeping and making herself reproaches for her attraction to the stranger. Karl joins her: she starts up to flee, then pulls out Karl's picture (*du Einziger*) for protection. Karl asks to see the portrait, she refuses. — Karl: 'Ah! And does he deserve this idolatry? does he deserve it?' Amalia: 'If you had known him! ...' And Amalia launches into praises of her lost beloved—his face, his voice, his eyes ... (not recognizing them before her). 'Here, where you stand, he stood a thousand times ... here he lay on my neck, his mouth burnt on mine ...' But now he sails on stormy seas, wanders through stony wastes, the midday sun beats down on his bare head, hail on his temples ... and wherever he goes Amalia's love goes with him. Then Karl speaks of *his* beloved: 'She too is called Amalia, gracious lady.' — Amalia: 'How I envy your Amalia.' — Karl; 'Oh, she is an unhappy maiden: her love is for a man lost for ever, and will—never be rewarded.'

Amalia cannot believe that one can be loved and unhappy. Karl explains: what if I were a murderer? At this Amalia jumps for joy: *her* beloved would never hurt a fly — 'his soul is as far from bloody thoughts as midday from midnight.' At this Karl 'turns quickly away into a bush and stares stonily into the distance.' Such theatricality, such long drawn out playing on the feelings of the audience is quite alien to Shakespeare, whose emotional peaks (Othello discovering himself deceived, Lear appearing with Cordelia) are sharp and of immediate but not clinging intensity: they shock us into rigidity, not move us to tears. And these scenes of Schiller's merely dwell on the emotion, they do not lead up to anything. Where Shakespeare is stark, Schiller luxuriates. Furthermore, Shakespeare is no revolutionary, his preoccupations are beyond class, his evil beyond reform; he reconciles us with the world in stoic acceptance, whereas Schiller incites us to revolt — his play is one long cry of protest. A Shakespearean audience is struck dumb, emotions suspended in tragic stasis, but at the first performance of *The Robbers* men waved clenched fists, women screamed and fainted, strangers fell sobbing into each other's arms — the theatre was in pandemonium.

Schiller repeats his formula yet again in the final act, after Karl has discovered his father, still alive, in the vault. This time the full Gothic trappings enhance the effect: night, dark forest, ruined castle, shadowy robbers *hin und her im Wald*. Karl stands opposite his father waiting for Schweizer to bring back Franz for his revenge. Old Moor, based on Gloucester in *Lear*, is a broken wreck: 'Forgiveness be his punishment — my revenge redoubled love.' For he believes Franz his one remaining son, since Karl dare not reveal the eldest and best loved has become a robber chief. Old Moor bursts out with self-reproach for the fate of his son Karl: 'Forgive me! forgive me!' And Karl: 'He forgives you.' Old Moor: 'The evil one entered the heart of my second; I trusted the snake — lost both my sons.' And Karl: 'Lost for ever!' Old Moor (I condense): 'In vain I stretch out my dying hands towards my son, in vain I dream of clasping the warm hand of my Karl.' And Karl gives him his hand. Old Moor: 'If only you were my Karl's hand.' And so on, with father and son working themselves and the audience into paroxysms of anguish. The poignance reaches its climax when Karl, who wants his father's blessing, asks and receives it as a stranger, and after it

the kiss of reconciliation — Old Moor: 'Think it is a father's kiss, and I will think I kiss my son.' Whereupon both weep. With such a preparation the ending can only be melodrama, for all the tragic potential of the theme. The robbers appear with Amalia ('A prize! a superb prize!'); Franz is dead; Amalia 'with streaming hair' leaps into her uncle's arms, then round Karl's neck, plunging the stage into hysteria. — Karl: 'Tear her away! Kill her! Kill him! me! you! everything! The whole world is collapsing!' He runs himself against an oak tree in a frenzy of despair, believing his blood guilt has deprived him for ever of love and happiness, and as Amalia tries to seize hold of him, he flings her off (*schleudert sie von sich*): 'Away, false snake. ...' And then, as we have seen, realizing she loves him in spite of his guilt, he finds himself redeemed by love, only to be reminded of his oath by the robbers, which precipitates the tragic dénouement.

What deprives the close of tragic significance is the emotional self-indulgence of the hero: the self-pitying pathos followed by histrionic despair reduces him to the schoolboy he has never outgrown. There is nothing of tragic distance: fear cannot be produced by hysteria. We want to calm him down and send him back to his father's grove in the arms of his Amalia. Only contrast this ending with the way Othello at the same juncture rises to his full stature dominating the stage by his refound self-possession, and the gulf separating Shakespearean tragedy from romantic pathos is immediately perceived. Of course the later Schiller came to look back in embarrassment on this *Jugendwerk*, which he called not a tragedy but 'a dramatic romance'. In November 1797, some ten years or more after his *Sturm und Drang* period was over, we find him writing to Goethe after reading *Richard III* again. He describes the play as 'one of the most sublime tragedies I know', in which may be enjoyed 'the pure form of tragic terror', and comments significantly: 'That the material excludes everything soft, melting or lachrymose, *alles Weichliche, Schmelzende, Weinerliche*, greatly assists this high effect.' In fact in Shakespeare's play there is neither idealism, sentimentality, nor false heroics, only as Schiller says 'a high Nemesis stalking through the play in every character, *wandelt durch das Stück, in allen Gestalten*.' The contrast is effectively brought home by another parallel scene: just as Franz courts the beloved of the brother he has banished, Richard courts the widow of the brother he has murdered. But whereas Amalia scorn-

fully spurns the insidious advances of Franz, even defending her virtue with his own sword, Anne is reduced from spitting to acceptance in a single interview:

Within so small a time, my woman's heart
Grossly grew captive to his honey words.

But apart from Schiller's sentimental weakening of the characters, there is another way in which he fatally undermines the tragic impact. In Shakespeare this world is final: our stake is won or lost here below, once and for all. No loving Father in Heaven guarantees the bliss of paradise for the virtuous. After Hamlet 'the rest is silence' (wherever the ghost may have come from). This starkness is nowhere more terrible than in the five times repeated 'Never' of King Lear on the death of Cordelia: 'Thou'lt come no more, /Never, never, never, never, never!' This cry is echoed by Old Moor after Hermann has brought news of the supposed death of his son: 'Never, never, never back from the grave. Gone, lost for ever ...' But Amalia consoles him: 'Not so, pitiful old man! the heavenly Father calls him to Him. We would have been too happy in this world. There, there, beyond the stars, we meet again.' This is the same reply as she will make to Karl, when he tells her that the love of his beloved will never be rewarded: 'No, it will be rewarded in heaven ...' This is Amalia's theme throughout — the theme of her song about Hector and Andromache: 'We meet again in Elysium.' The theme runs right through *Werther*: all who have loved will meet again in heaven — Werther and the girl who died in his youth, Lotte and her mother, Werther and Lotte. ... This confusion of love, religion and virtue is again a basic article of eighteenth century sensibility:

*Ich bin redlich! Mir gab die Natur Empfindung zur Tugend;
Aber mächtiger war, die sie zur Liebe mir gab,
Zu der Liebe, der schönsten der Tugenden ...*

— Klopstock: *Die Künftige Geliebte*

I am honourable! Nature gave me feeling for virtue;
But more powerful the feeling she gave me for love,
For love, the most beautiful of the virtues ...

Werther feels so virtuous in his love for Lotte that he conceives an immediate relationship between himself and God the Father —

without the need of Christ's Atonement. This is a world where Original Sin has been washed away by Rousseau's faith in the natural goodness of man. Werther can write to his friend Wilhelm: 'Suppose the Father wants to keep me for Himself, as my heart tells me?' His love is presented in religious terms: Lotte is 'holy' to him, 'an angel', 'pure', etc. Sensibility is taken for spirituality. Werther contemplates retirement to a cell: 'The hair shirt and crown of thorns are the comforts for which my soul pines.' And having decided to die, he imagines his grave in a lonely valley with 'priests and levites crossing themselves as they go by.' His clothes, the pistols, Lotte's silhouette, the pale red bow, are treated as the sacramental objects of a new cult. His death is martyrdom (or crucifixion). Rousseau, Klopstock, Werther — Schiller had read them all. And as we have seen, Amalia's purity and love, like Christ's, is sufficient to redeem Karl for the next world, if not for this.

But there is more to Schiller's religious faith than this. We have noticed that he shares with Shakespeare a belief in a moral world order continually reasserting itself. But unlike Shakespeare, he presents this order, or principle of world justice, not in natural but in religious terms. It is not only morality which the Preface claims to vindicate, but religion. According to Reinhardt Buchwald, 'We know what interpretation of the world was dear to his heart from his earliest upbringing: an unqualified trust in a good Father in Heaven, who has ordered suffering also for our good; and we know too that he developed this interpretation into a philosophical theodicy.' Now tragedy cannot be reconciled with theodicy: behind Schiller's drama lie the eighteenth century optimistic philosophies of Providence and the moral sense (Shaftesbury, Rousseau). There is no room for Machiavelli or Iago here. As Pastor Moser tells Franz while Nemesis closes in: 'An inner tribunal, which you could never corrupt by brooding sophistries (*skeptische Grübeleien*) will now awaken and deliver judgement upon you.' In fact Franz has never been able to suppress his conscience — he could never finally rationalize away his qualms at killing his father. His ignominious collapse, the triumphant vindication of Pastor Moser, cannot be compared with the moments of doubt and repentance that afflict a Richard or Edmund before their deaths, while Iago never hears the voice of conscience at all. Franz is uneasy from the very beginning, and the supremacy of God

and God's law is given a shattering finality by Pastor Moser when Franz tries to deny that God exists:

Franz: Now I'm speaking with you seriously; I tell you: there is no God. You are to refute me with all the weapons in your power, but I shall blow them away with the breath of my mouth.

Moser: As much as you might blow away the thunder which will fall on your proud soul with the force of ten thousand hundredweights! This all-knowing God, whom you, fool and scoundrel, think to destroy from out of his own creation, does not need to vindicate Himself through mouths of dust. He is as great in your tyrannies, as in any smile of victorious virtue.

A good God, an all-powerful God, a perspective beyond this imperfect world; Franz in hell, Karl on his way to heaven — not, in short, the world of Shakespearean tragedy.

পুরাণের পুনর্জন্ম ও রবীন্দ্রনাথ

নরেন্দ্রনাথ ভট্টাচার্য

ইওরোপীয় রেনেসাঁস গ্রীক চিন্তাজগৎকে নতুন ক'রে আবিষ্কার করেছিল এবং ব্যক্তিমুক্তি ও মানবতাবোধের উদ্বোধন ক'রে সমগ্র ইওরোপের ভবিষ্যৎ উজ্জ্বল ক'রে তুলেছিল। আমাদের বাংলাদেশেও ঊনবিংশ শতাব্দী এক হিসেবে রেনেসাঁসের যুগ। এখানেও কোনো-কোনো পুরনো চিন্তাকে নতুন ক'রে আবিষ্কার করা হ'ল এবং ইওরোপীয় রেনেসাঁসের ফল যে-ব্যক্তিমুক্তি এবং মানবতাবোধ তাও আমরা পেয়েছিলাম। এবং এটা এসেছিল পাশ্চাত্য সভ্যতা ও সংস্কৃতির সংঘর্ষ এবং প্রভাবে। এর ফলে দেশের বন্ধ-আত্মা মুক্ত হ'য়ে জেগে উঠল। এই নবজাগরণ সাহিত্যে বিশেষ ক'রে প্রতিফলিত হ'তে লাগল। মধুসূদন ও বঙ্কিম এই নতুন যুগের পুরোধ। তাঁরা বাংলা সাহিত্যকে আধুনিকতায় দীক্ষিত করলেন। সাহিত্যে এই আধুনিকতা নতুন ধ্যান-ধারণায়, নতুন ভাষায়, মানবমনের সূক্ষ্মাতিসূক্ষ্ম জটিল গ্রন্থির বিমোচন এবং বিশ্লেষণে। প্রাচীন সাহিত্যিক ছিলেন বস্তু-অথবা তন্ময়তাপন্থী, আধুনিক সাহিত্যিক হলেন আত্ম-অথবা মন্বয়তাপন্থী। সাহিত্যের জগৎ এবং দৃষ্টিভঙ্গির আমূল পরিবর্তন ঘটল। পাশ্চাত্য দেশের নানা কবি ও সাহিত্যিক আধুনিক যুগধারায় পুরনো কাহিনীর নবরূপায়ণ করেছেন। আমাদের দেশেও আধুনিক সাহিত্যিক যখন পুরনো কাহিনীকে সাহিত্যের উপজীব্য করলেন—তখন সে-কাহিনীর রূপ ও রস একেবারে বদলে গেল। সাহিত্যিকের মনের রঙে এবং রসে পৌরাণিক কাহিনী রঞ্জিত এবং অভিষিক্ত হ'ল।

বাংলাসাহিত্যে এ-ধারার প্রথম প্রবর্তক মাইকেল মধুসূদন। 'মেঘনাদবধ কাব্য'র আধার রামায়ণ। স্বাধীনচিন্তা মধুসূদন রামায়ণের মূল কাহিনীকে ইচ্ছামতো পরিবর্তন করলেন। তাঁর মনে গ্রীক মানবতাবাদের যে-অসীম প্রভাব ছিল, তারই ফলে রাবণ এবং ইন্দ্রজিৎ তাঁর কাব্যে মহনীয় হ'য়ে উঠল। এরা বান্ধাকি রামায়ণের মায়াবী নরখাদক রাক্ষস আর রইল না, হুসংস্কৃত মানবরূপেই পরিচিত হ'ল। 'মেঘনাদবধ কাব্য' অবশ্য আদর্শের ছন্দে নীচ আদর্শের পরাভব এবং নৈতিক শক্তির জয় হয়েছে; কিন্তু রাবণ-ইন্দ্রজিৎের চরিত্রায়ণে কবি কাব্য-পাঠকের যে-সহৃদয়তা আকর্ষণ করেন, শিল্পদৃষ্টিতে তা অনবগ্ন এবং কবির অপূর্ববস্তু-নির্মাণ-ক্ষমাপ্রজ্ঞার প্রমাণ। মধুসূদনের মন ক্লাসিসিজম এবং রোমান্সিজমের সংমিশ্রণ ধাতুতে গড়া ছিল। মূল রামায়ণে সীতা-সরমা সংবাদ একটি অতি সংক্ষিপ্ত ঘটনা। মায়াবী রাবণ সীতাকে রামের ছিন্নমুণ্ড দেখিয়েছিল।

সরমা সীতাকে সাশ্বনা দিয়ে বলেছিলেন, ওটা মিথ্যা। এইটুকু মাত্র কাহিনী রামায়ণে আছে। মধুসূদনের রোমাটিক মন এই স্ত্রটুকু মাত্র অবলম্বন ক'রে 'মেঘনাদবধে'র অপরূপ সুন্দর চতুর্থ সর্গটি রচনা করল।) বাঙালি বধূর কল্যাণী মূর্তির মতো এ-ছবি চরিত্র কবির অপরিমিত দরদ এবং কল্পনার মিশ্রণে বাঙালি হৃদয়ে চিরকালের জগ্ন মূদ্রিত হ'য়ে থাকবে। বাঙালি পাঠকের কানে চিরদিন অনুরণিত হবে ক'টি পংক্তি—

ছিহু মোরা, হুলোচনে, গোদাবরী তীরে,

কপোত-কপোতী যথা উচ্চ বৃক্ষচূড়ে

বাধি নীড়, থাকে স্থখে।

প্রমীলার চরিত্র কল্পনা আরো বেশি রোমাটিক। মূল রামায়ণে এ-চরিত্র আদৌ অনুপস্থিত। এ মাইকেলের নিজস্ব সৃষ্টি। ইওরোপীয় কাব্যপুরাণের বিভিন্ন নারীচরিত্র, ঝাঁসীর রানী লক্ষ্মীবাদি এবং কাশীদাসী মহাভারতের নারীরাজ্যের প্রমীলা—সব কিছুই সংমিশ্রণে মাইকেল এ-অপরূপ নারীচরিত্র সৃষ্টি করেছিলেন যার মধ্যে বজ্রাদপি কঠোরানি মৃদুনি কুসুমাদপির বিস্ময়কর সমন্বয় আমরা লক্ষ্য করি। 'মেঘনাদবধে'র ক্লাসিক আড়ম্বর এবং বিশালতার মধ্যে এ-তিনটি নারী চরিত্র সৃষ্টি আধুনিক কবিমানসের স্ফোটক।

উনবিংশ শতাব্দীর বাংলাদেশে যে-নবজাগরণ এসেছিল তার প্রধান লক্ষণগুলোর মধ্যে ব্যক্তিমুক্তি এবং মানবতাবোধের কথা আমরা পূর্বে উল্লেখ করেছি। মধুসূদনের 'বীরঙ্গনাকাব্যে' তার সার্থক রূপায়ণ লক্ষ্য করি। এই পত্রকাব্যের চরিত্রগুলো পৌরাণিক। কাহিনীগুলো প্রায়শঃ কাল্পনিক। মধুসূদন রোমক কবি ওভিডের অনুসরণে এই পত্রকাব্য রচনা করেন। ওভিড যেমন পুরাণ-কাহিনীর নায়িকাদের সম্পূর্ণ নতুন এবং রোমাটিক সাজে সাজিয়েছিলেন, মাইকেলও তেমনি তাঁর নায়িকাদের নতুন এবং রোমাটিক মূর্তি দিয়েছেন। বৃহস্পতি-পত্নী তারার বৃহস্পতি-শিশু সোমের প্রতি প্রেমনিবেদন যেমন রোমাটিকধর্মী তেমনি আধুনিক নারীর হৃদয়মুক্তির পরিচয়বাহী। ওভিডের ফিড্রার সঙ্গে তারার তুলনা হ'তে পারে, যদিও মাইকেল ভারতীয় সংস্কার একেবারে ত্যাগ করেননি তারার পাপবোধের উল্লেখের দ্বারা। বীরঙ্গনা পত্রকাব্যে কেকয়ী এবং জনার চরিত্র যেমন কাব্যকলার দিক থেকে শ্রেষ্ঠ তেমনি নতুন মনোভঙ্গির পরিচায়ক। এদের মধ্যে প্রেমনিবেদন নেই, স্বামীর বিরুদ্ধে অভিযোগ আছে, এবং সে-অভিযোগ উনবিংশ শতাব্দীর জাগরণে নারীস্বাভাব্য নব মূল্যায়নের জগ্নই হয়েছিল।

বন্ধিম কোনো পৌরাণিক কাহিনীকে আশ্রয় ক'রে তাঁর কোনো উপন্যাস রচনা করেননি। প্রাসঙ্গিকভাবে যুগধারাবর্ণনে তাঁর 'কৃষ্ণচরিত্রে'র কথা এসে গেলেও আমাদের বর্তমান প্রবন্ধের বক্তব্যে তার স্থান নেই। স্তত্রাং আমরা এখন কবি হেমচন্দ্রকে নিয়ে আলোচনা করতে পারি। হেমচন্দ্র ঐ সময়কার সর্বপ্রধান দেশাত্মবাদী কবি। 'ভারত-

সংগীত' তার বড়ো প্রমাণ। বাহ্য দৃষ্টিতে একটি মরাঠী কাহিনী হ'লেও এ-সংগীতের মাধ্যমে পরাধীনতার গ্লানি কবি মর্মভেদী ভাষায় প্রকাশ করেছেন। হেমচন্দ্রের কৃতিত্ব 'বৃত্তসংহার' রচনায়। ইন্দ্র-বৃত্তের কাহিনী মূলত বৈদিক, পল্লবিত আকারে পৌরাণিক। 'বৃত্তসংহার' কাব্যের অন্তরালে কবির দেশাত্মবোধই সদাজাগ্রত। এ-কাব্য জাতিবৈয়ের কাব্য। 'মেঘনাদবধে' ইন্দ্রজিং খুল্লতাত বিভীষণকে দেশদ্রোহী ব'লে নিন্দা করেছেন, এবং পিতার পাপকর্ম সত্ত্বেও দেশের জন্ত প্রাণ দিয়েছেন। 'বৃত্তসংহারে'ও রুদ্রপীড় পিতা বৃত্তাসুরের শচীহরণরূপ পাপকর্ম সমর্থন করেছেন স্বকীয় ব্যক্তিত্ব প্রকাশ-প্রেরণায় এবং দেশাত্মবোধে অনুপ্রাণিত হ'য়ে। রাক্ষসদের প্রতি মাইকেলের মতো, অসুরদের প্রতি হেমচন্দ্রের কোনো সহানুভূতি ছিল না। তিনি দেবতাদের শ্রেষ্ঠত্বই প্রতিপন্ন করেছেন, কারণ তাঁর কাব্যের নিহিতার্থ ইংরেজ সরকারের ধ্বংস। হেমচন্দ্রের 'বৃত্তসংহার' উদ্দেশ্যপ্রসূত এবং অনুকৃত। তাঁর অনুকরণের আত্মসাৎকরণ হয়নি। তাছাড়া সহৃদয় সহানুভূতির অভাবে তাঁর কাব্য রসোত্তীর্ণ হ'তে পারেনি। দ্বীচির অস্থিদান 'বৃত্তসংহার' কাব্যে একটি বড়ো ঘটনা। ঘটনাটি পৌরাণিক; কিন্তু এর বর্ণনায় হেমচন্দ্র ঊনবিংশ শতাব্দীর হিতবাদে দ্বারা প্রভাবিত হয়েছিলেন।)

পরহিতব্রত, কবি, ধর্ম যে পরম।

দ্বীচি তাজিলা তমু দেবের মঙ্গলে।—

হেমচন্দ্রের 'দশমহাবিদ্ধা'ও তন্ত্রপুরাণকে অবলম্বন ক'রে। তন্ত্র কিংবা পুরাণে দশমহাবিদ্ধার যে-রূপ এবং বর্ণনা পাওয়া যায় হেমচন্দ্র তা যথাযথ অনুসরণ করেননি। তিনি এদের নতুন রূপ এবং ভাব দিয়েছেন। শক্তির বিভিন্ন রূপ, উগ্র এবং শান্ত। কিন্তু মূলত তা একই। অবিদ্ধার দ্বারা আবৃত ব'লে আমরা সেটা বুঝি না। আমাদের শোক, মোহ এইজন্ত। এই দার্শনিক তত্ত্ব হেমচন্দ্র দশমহাবিদ্ধার উপাদানে আমাদের দিয়েছেন। নবীন সেনও পৌরাণিক কাহিনীকে নিজস্বভাবে নতুন রূপ দিয়েছেন। 'রৈবতক' 'কুরুক্ষেত্রে' আর্ষ-অনার্যের সংমিশ্রণে ভারতের ঐক্যসাধনের যে-মন্ত্র নবীন সেনের দ্বারা উদ্গীত হ'ল, মূল মহাভারতে তা নেই। মূল মহাভারতের মর্মবাণী—যতো ধর্মন্ততো জয়ঃ। বেদব্যাস এবং শ্রীকৃষ্ণকে নবীন সেন নবভাবে ভাবিত করেছেন। মহাভারতের নবীকরণও ঊনবিংশ শতাব্দীর দেশাত্মবোধ জাগরণের সচ ফল।

হেম-নবীনের কাব্যে পুরোনো কাহিনীর নবায়ন হয়েছে সত্য, কিন্তু সর্বথা কাব্য সৃষ্টি হয়নি। মধুমানসে যে-জাহ্ন ছিল এঁদের তা ছিল না। হেমচন্দ্র অতি সাবধানী—নবীন সেন আবেগময় কবি, কিন্তু মহাকাব্যের কবি নন। মধুসূদনের সঙ্গে এঁদের এখানেই প্রভেদ। (মাইকেল পৌরাণিক কাহিনীর নবরূপায়ণের যে-ধারা প্রবর্তন করলেন তা

সার্থকতা লাভ করল রবীন্দ্রনাথে। বর্তমান প্রবন্ধের মূল বক্তব্য এই নতুন সাধনা রবীন্দ্রনাথের অপূর্ব সিদ্ধিলাভ।

রবীন্দ্রনাথ বিহারীলালের মস্তশিষ্য। যে-অনুপ্রেরণা তিনি কিশোর বয়সে বিহারীলালের কাব্য থেকে পেয়েছিলেন, তা পরিপুষ্ট এবং পরিমার্জিত হয়েছিল পারিবারিক পরিবেশ এবং শিক্ষা-দীক্ষায়। উনবিংশ শতাব্দীর শেষপাদে বাংলাদেশে পাশ্চাত্য ভাবধারা এবং আধুনিকতা প্রায় সম্পূর্ণভাবে প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়েছিল। রবীন্দ্রনাথের মানসিক পরিমণ্ডল এই ধারা প্রভাবিত; কিন্তু ভারতীয় ধর্ম, ঐতিহ্য এবং সাহিত্যের উপর তা দৃঢ়প্রতিষ্ঠ। সেই জগতই মধুসূদনের সঙ্গে তাঁর প্রভেদ লক্ষ্য করা যায়। মধুসূদন পৌরাণিক কাহিনীর নবরূপায়ণে প্রাচীন ঐতিহ্যকে অস্বীকার করেছেন; রবীন্দ্রনাথ প্রাচীনকে স্বীকার করে তার নতুন রূপ দিয়েছেন। আধুনিক কবি-মনের যে-বিশেষত্ব আমরা পূর্বে উল্লেখ করেছি রবীন্দ্রনাথে তার পরাকাষ্ঠা। জন্ম-রোমাটিক রবি-কবির মন্বন্তরতার কথা আর নতুন করে বলবার অপেক্ষা রাখে না। তাঁর অনুভূতিপ্রবণ সূক্ষ্ম সূকুমার পরিশীলিত মন যেখানে গিয়েছে সেখানেই ইন্দ্রজালের সৃষ্টি করেছে। সে-ইন্দ্রজাল কাব্যের অলৌকিক মায়াবী জগৎ। তা যেমন রবিরশ্মির মতোই বর্ণাঢ্য, তেমনি বিচিত্র।

(উপনিষদ, রামায়ণ, মহাভারত, বৌদ্ধপুরাণ ও জাতক এবং কালিদাসের কাব্য রবীন্দ্রনাথ সাহিত্যে প্রভাব বিস্তার করে ওতপ্রোতভাবে মিশে আছে। মৌলিক উপাদানগুলো এমনভাবে আত্মসাৎকৃত হয়েছে যে তাদের পার্থক্য অনুভূতিগম্য হয় না; মনে হয় এগুলো একান্তভাবে রবীন্দ্রনাথের, অস্ত্রের নয়। রামায়ণের আখ্যান নিয়ে আমরা আলোচনা আরম্ভ করব। এর অন্তর্গত হবে গীতিনাট্য ‘বান্মীকি-প্রতিভা’, ‘কালমৃগয়া’, এবং ‘কাহিনী’র দুটি কবিতা—‘ভাষা ও ছন্দ’, ‘পতিতা’)

সংস্কৃত রামায়ণে বান্মীকির কাব্যপ্রতিভাস্ফুরণের ঘটনাটি এইরূপ—নারদকে বান্মীকি প্রশ্ন করলেন : ভূমণ্ডলে বর্তমানে এমন কে নরোত্তম আছেন যিনি বিপদে অধীর হন না, যিনি বীর, যিনি ধৈর্যে পর্বতের মতো অটল, সমুদ্রের মতো গম্ভীর ইত্যাদি। নারদ উত্তর দিলেন—নরচন্দ্রমা রাম। বান্মীকি তারপর তমসায় স্নান করতে গেলেন। বখন নদীতটের শ্রাম শোভা দেখছেন তখন তাঁরই সামনে ক্রোধ-হত্যা সংঘটিত হ’ল। এবং তৎক্ষণাৎ তাঁর মুখ থেকে ‘মা নিষাদ’ শ্লোকটি নিঃসৃত হ’ল। সঙ্গে-সঙ্গে তাঁর মনে হ’ল—কিমিদং ব্যহতং ময়া। স্নানান্তে আশ্রমে ফিরে এলেন কিন্তু সারাক্ষণ কী-রকম ঘেন্না দানব হ’য়ে রইলেন। এমন সময় ব্রহ্মা এসে উপস্থিত হলেন। বান্মীকির মনে-মনে শ্লোকটি পুনরায় আবৃত্ত হ’তে লাগল। ব্রহ্মা বললেন—আমার ইচ্ছারই এ-শ্লোক তোমার মুখনিঃসৃত হয়েছে। তুমি রামায়ণ রচনা করো। বান্মীকি এ-কার্যের দুঃসহতা জ্ঞাপন করলে ব্রহ্মা বললেন—ন তে বাগনৃতা কাব্যে কাচিদত্র ভবিষ্যতি—তুমি যা বলবে সবই

দত্য হবে। অবিদিত সমস্ত কিছু তোমার বিদিত হবে। আদি কবির জন্ম হ'ল খুব স্বাভাবিক ভাবে—শোক-ঘটনায় করুণা-জাগরণে।

সংস্কৃত রামায়ণের বান্মীকি মুনি, দস্যু নন। রত্নাকর দস্যুর কাহিনী 'অধ্যাত্ম রামায়ণ' থেকে রামায়ণে গৃহীত হয়েছিল। 'বান্মীকি-প্রতিভা'র রবীন্দ্রনাথ এই কাহিনীর উপর নির্ভর করেছেন এবং দস্যুরা কালীভক্ত এই কিংবদন্তীর জন্ত বান্মীকিকে কালীর শ্রব-রত দেখিয়েছেন। নরবলির জন্ত একটি বালিকাকে অস্ত্র দস্যুরা ধরেছে এমন সময় বান্মীকির মনে করুণা জেগে উঠল এবং তিনি বালিকাকে মুক্তি দিতে আদেশ করলেন। এই ঘটনা বান্মীকির হৃদয়কে করুণাঙ্গ ক'রে রেখেছিল—ইতিমধ্যে ব্যাধের দ্বারা ক্রৌঞ্চহত্যা তাঁরই সামনে ঘটল। তখন তাঁর মুখ থেকে 'মা নিষাদ' শ্লোক নিঃসৃত হ'ল। এমন সময় সরস্বতীর আবির্ভাব। বান্মীকি অবাক বিস্ময়ে চেয়ে রইলেন। সরস্বতী অস্তর্হিতা হ'লে লক্ষ্মী এলেন। বান্মীকি লক্ষ্মীকে প্রত্যাখ্যান করলেন। আবার সরস্বতীর আবির্ভাব। তিনি বললেন বালিকার মূর্তিতে তিনিই এসেছিলেন। বর দিলেন—

আমি বীণাপাণি তোরে শিখাতে এসেছি গান।

তোর গানে গলে যাবে সহস্র পাষণ প্রাণ।

বিহারীলালের সারদামঙ্গলের বান্মীকির কাব্যপ্রতিভাস্ফুরণে যে-জ্যোতির্ময়ী ললাটিকা কণ্ঠার কথা আছে, রবীন্দ্রনাথ তার দ্বারাই প্রভাবিত হয়েছিলেন বালিকা মূর্তিতে জ্যোতির্ময়ী সরস্বতী কল্পনায়। লক্ষ্মীর প্রত্যাখ্যানেও বিহারীলালের প্রভাব আছে। 'ভাষা ও ছন্দ'ও ঐ প্রতিভাস্ফুরণের কাহিনী নিয়ে। বান্মীকির হৃদয়ে কাব্যছন্দ স্ফুরিত হয়েছে—কী রূপ তাকে দেবেন বিভ্রান্ত হ'য়ে ভাবছেন; এমন সময় ব্রহ্মার আদেশে নারদ এলেন। প্রশ্ন করলেন যে-ছন্দ বান্মীকি লাভ করেছেন তা দিয়ে কোন দেবতার অমর গান রচনা করবেন। বান্মীকি প্রত্যুত্তরে বললেন—দেবতার কথা তিনি রচনা করবেন না।

মানবের

জীর্ণবাক্যে বোর ছন্দ দিবে নব সুর

অর্থের বন্ধন হতে নিয়ে তারে যাবে কিছুদূর

ভাবের স্বাধীন লোকে।

'ভাষা ও ছন্দ' মূল রামায়ণের প্রায় অমুগ। কেবল ব্রহ্মা নিজে না-এসে নারদকে পাঠিয়েছেন।

'বান্মীকি-প্রতিভা'র কাহিনীকে কবি বাংলা রামায়ণ, কিংবদন্তী এবং বিহারীলালের

অগ্রসরনে রূপ দিয়েছেন। ভবিষ্যৎ মহাকবি রবীন্দ্রনাথের কবিষয়ঃ আকাজক্ষাও আভাসিত হয়ে উঠেছে ছুটি ছত্রে—

আমি বীণাপাণি তোরে শিখাতে এসেছি গান।

তোর গানে গলে যাবে সহস্র পাষণ প্রাণ।

‘ভাষা ও ছন্দ’ আধুনিক কাব্যশিল্পের মূল কথাটুকু আছে। কবি দেবতার কথা গণবেন না। এবং ‘মানবের জীর্ণ বাক্যে মোর ছন্দ দিবে নব সুর অর্থের বন্ধন হ’তে নিয়ে তারে যাবে কিছুদূর/ভাবের স্বাধীন লোকে’—এখানেই রোমান্টিক মন্বয় কবির মন ধরা পড়ে। ক্রান্তপ্রজ্ঞ কবির শিল্পদৃষ্টির কথাও অপূর্ব সুন্দর ভাষায় বলা হয়েছে—

কবি, তব মনোভূমি

রামের জনমস্থান, অযোধ্যার চেয়ে সত্য জেনো।

‘কালমৃগয়া’র কাহিনীটুকু রামায়ণ, অযোধ্যা কাণ্ড থেকে গৃহীত। দশরথ অঙ্ক মুনির পুত্রকে ভ্রমবশত বাণবিন্দু ক’রে মেরেছেন। অঙ্কমুনি তাঁকে অভিশাপ দিয়েছেন—

পুত্র ব্যসনজং দুঃখং যদেত্তমম সাম্প্রতম্।

এবং তং পুত্রশোকেন রাজন্ কালং করিষ্যসি।

মূলের সঙ্গে এইটুকুমাত্র যোগ। বাকি সব অংশ কবির স্বকল্পিত। গীতিনাট্যের প্রয়োজনেই বন-দেবীগণ কল্পিত হয়েছেন; তারা নাট্যরসকে অগ্রসর ক’রে নিয়ে যাচ্ছেন। সর্বশেষ দৃশ্বে অঙ্ক মুনির পুত্রের মৃতদেহ ঘিরে বন-দেবীগণের গান একটি অতি করুণ পরিবেশের সৃষ্টি করেছে। মূলে আছে অঙ্কমুনির পুত্র দিব্যদেহ প্রাপ্ত হয়ে স্বর্গে গেলেন এবং মাতাপিতাকে এই আশ্বাস দিলেন যে তাঁরাও শীঘ্রই তাঁর অশ্রুগমন করবেন। রবীন্দ্রনাথ শেষ দৃশ্বে যে-করুণ রস সঞ্চার করেছেন বাস্তবিক রামায়ণে তা অনুভূত হয় না। দুঃখের দাবদাহ সেখানে যেন শান্ত হ’য়ে গিয়েছে।

‘কাহিনী’র ‘পতিতা’ কবিতাও রামায়ণের সঙ্গে সংযুক্ত। ঋগ্বেদকে ভুলিয়ে আনার ঋগ্বেদ রোমপাদের মন্ত্রীরা বারাক্ষিকাদের প্রেরণ করেন। তারা মধুর স্বরে গান গাইতে-গাইতে আশ্রমে প্রবেশ করল। ঋগ্বেদ পাঠার্থ্য নিয়ে তাদের সংকার করলেন, তারাও নানাবিধ ফল মুনি-পুত্রকে দিল। প্রথম দিন তারা ফিরে এল। কিন্তু পরে একদিন ঋগ্বেদ তাদের সঙ্গে চ’লে এলেন। রোমপাদের কন্যা শান্তার সঙ্গে তার বিবাহ হল। মূল রামায়ণের কাহিনী এই। রবীন্দ্রনাথ এই সূত্রকে অবলম্বন ক’রে বারনারীদের অগত্যমাকে নিয়ে ‘পতিতা’ কবিতা রচনা করলেন। আজন্ম ব্রহ্মচারী তরুণ তাপসের উপঃ-উজ্জ্বল মূর্তি তাকে মুগ্ধ করেছিল। অগ্নাগ্নদের মতো সে এই তরুণ তাপসকে

ভোলাবার চেষ্টা করতে পারল না। কেন পারল না সে-কথাই সে রাজমন্ত্রী কাছে নিবেদন করছে। পতিতার অন্তর্লোক কী ক'রে শোধিত হ'য়ে গেল একটি অপাপবিন্দু ব্রহ্মচারীর সহজ সরল দৃষ্টিপাতে, তাই এ-কবিতার মর্মার্থ। নিষাপ দৃষ্টিতে নারী-দৌন্দর্য কত মহিমময় হ'য়ে ওঠে ঋগ্বেদের কথায় তা আছে—

আনন্দময়ী মুরতি তোমার,
কোন দেব তুমি আনিলে দিবা।
অমৃতসরস তোমার পরশ,
তোমার নয়নে দিবা বিতা।

বিশ্বয়মুগ্ধ পরিশোধিতাচিত্ত পতিতার মুখে প্রত্যুত্তরে শুনতে পাই—

দেবতারে তুমি দেখেছ, তোমার
সরল নয়ন করেনি ভুল।

সত্যই, দিব্যদৃষ্টিতে দেবতাকেই দেখা যায়। কত উচ্চগ্রামে রবীন্দ্রনাথের ভাব-স্বর বাঁধা হয়েছে এ-কবিতায়!

এখন আমরা মহাভারতের কাহিনী নিয়ে আলোচনা করতে পারি। আদিপর্বের কচ-দেবযানী আখ্যান নিয়ে রবীন্দ্রনাথ 'বিদায় অভিষাপ' রচনা করেছেন। বৃহস্পতির পুত্র কচ সঞ্জীবনী বিত্তা লাভ করবার জন্ত দৈত্যগুরু শুক্রাচার্যের শিষ্য হলেন। তাঁর পরিচর্যারতা শুক্রকন্যা দেবযানী ক্রমশ তাঁর প্রতি প্রেমাক্ষুণ্ণ হলেন। দৈত্যরা কচের বিত্তালাভ ব্যর্থ করবার জন্ত বারবার কচকে বধ করেছিল। কিন্তু প্রতিবারই দেবযানীর কাতর অহুনে শুক্রাচার্য তাকে পুনর্জীবিত করেছিলেন। সঞ্জীবনী বিত্তালাভে সিদ্ধকাম হ'য়ে কচ যখন বিদায় চাইলেন তখন দেবযানী তাকে বিবাহ করতে অহুরোধ জানালেন। দেবযানী তার গুরুপুত্রী, পূজনীয়া, ভগিনীসদৃশা ইত্যাদি আপত্তি উত্থাপন ক'রে কচ তাঁকে প্রত্যাখ্যান করলেন। দেবযানী অভিষাপ দিলেন—তোমার অর্জিত বিত্তা ফলবতী হবে না। কচও প্রত্যভিষাপ দিলেন—তুমি কামবশত আমাকে অভিষাপ দিলে, আমিও অভিষাপ দিচ্ছি কোনো ঋষিপুত্র তোমাকে বিবাহ করবে না। মহাভারতের কাহিনী এই। এখানে অভিষাপ ও প্রত্যভিষাপ আছে। দেবযানীও তেজস্বিনী নারী।

রবীন্দ্রনাথের শিল্প-কৌশল এই কাহিনী নিয়ে ত্যাগ এবং মহত্বের উচ্চ আদর্শ সৃষ্টি করেছে। 'বিদায় অভিষাপে' প্রত্যাখ্যাত দেবযানী কচকে অভিষাপ দিলেন—

যে-বিত্তায়ত্তরে
মোরে করো অবহেলা—সে বিত্তা তোমার
সম্পূর্ণ হবে না বশ। তুমি শুধু তার

ভারবাহী হয়ে রবে। করিবে না ভোগ,
শিখাইবে, পারিবে না করিতে প্রয়োগ।

৭৮ কোনো অভিষাপ দিলেন না। ক্ষমাসুন্দর উদার হৃদয়ে দেবযানীকে বর
দিলেন—

আমি বর দিখু দেবী তুমি স্থখী হবে
ভুলে যাবে সর্ব গ্লানি বিপুল গৌরবে।

মহাভারতে দেবযানী কচকে বারে-বারে জীবন দান করেছেন; কচ দেবযানীর
কাছে কৃতজ্ঞ। কিন্তু বিবাহ সম্ভব নয়, যেহেতু দেবযানী গুরুপুত্রী। তা ছাড়া
দেবযানীর প্রতি কচ প্রেমাকৃষ্ট হননি। রবীন্দ্রনাথে যুবক-যুবতীর মধ্যে প্রেমের
স্বাভাবিক গতি লক্ষ্য করি। কচ দেবযানীর প্রতি আকৃষ্ট,—কচ দেবযানীকে
বলছেন—

আর যাহা আছে তাহা প্রকাশের নয়,
সখি! বহে যাহা মর্মমাঝে রক্তময়
বাহিরে তা কেমনে দেখাব ?

৭৯ তাঁর মহৎ ব্রত-উদ্‌যাপনে বিবাহ পরিপন্থী, কারণ সঞ্জীবনী বিত্তা স্বর্গলোকে
দেখে যেতে হবে। না হ'লে কর্তব্যাক্রষ্ট হবেন। কচ এখানে অনেক বেশি বাস্তবতাময়।
মহাভারতে কচ দেবযানী দুজনেই যুক্তিতর্ক এবং বাক্যের দ্বারা নিজেদের সমর্থন করছেন।
রবীন্দ্রনাথের সুস্ব কলাকৌশল অত্র পরিবেশের সৃষ্টি করেছে। দেবযানী ইঙ্গিতে,
কৌশলে তাঁর প্রেম নিবেদন করছেন, কচের প্রেমাকর্ষণ করবার চেষ্টা করছেন, আবার
কচ তাঁর প্রার্থনা ব্যর্থ হ'য়ে গেল তখন নিঃস্বা হ'য়ে উঠছেন। রবীন্দ্রনাথের দেবযানী
কচের হ'য়ে ওঠেননি, মূলেরই মতো তিনি তেজস্বিনী এবং ব্যর্থ প্রেমে নীতিধর্মজ্ঞানহীনা।
মহাভারতে দেবযানীর পরবর্তী চরিত্রও প্রশংসনীয় নয়; তিনি দান্তিকা এবং কূট-
কৌশল। রবীন্দ্রনাথের দেবযানী অনেকটা আধুনিকী হ'য়ে উঠেছেন। কিন্তু রবীন্দ্র-
নাথের কচ সর্বতোভাবে মহত্তর হ'য়ে উঠেছেন। তিনি কর্তব্যব্রত, জিতেন্দ্রিয় এবং
উদারহৃদয়।

‘চিত্রাঙ্গদা’ও আদিপর্বের আখ্যান। পাণ্ডব-ভ্রাতাদের মধ্যে দৌপদ্রী-সম্পর্কে
কোনো নিয়ম ছিল, কর্তব্যানুরোধে অজুর্ন তা ভঙ্গ করতে বাধ্য হন। ফলে তাকে বনবাসে
প্রেরিত হয়। এই বনবাসকালে তিনি মণিপুরে গেলেন; সেখানকার রাজা চিত্রবাহনের
পুত্রী কন্যাকে দেখে তিনি পাণিপ্রার্থী হলেন। চিত্রবাহন বললেন—আমার পুত্র নেই।
চিত্রাঙ্গদাকেই আমি পুত্র গণ্য করি। তার গর্ভজাত পুত্র আমার বংশধর হবে—এই

প্রতিজ্ঞা করলে তাকে বিবাহ করতে পার। অর্জুন স্বীকৃত হলেন এবং চিত্রাঙ্গদার পুত্র জন্মগ্রহণ করবার পর তিনি পুনরায় ভ্রমণে বেরোলেন। মহাভারতের কাহিনী এই।

রবীন্দ্রনাথ তাঁর ‘চিত্রাঙ্গদা’র এ-কাহিনীর আমূল পরিবর্তন করেছেন। চিত্রাঙ্গদা কুরূপা। তিনি বালকবেশধারী ছিলেন, কিন্তু অর্জুনকে দেখে তাঁর নারীত্ব জাগ্রত হ’ল, তিনি অর্জুনের প্রতি আকৃষ্ট হ’য়ে নানা বসন-ভূষণে সজ্জিত হলেন এবং প্রেম নিবেদন করলেন। অর্জুন বললেন—

ত্রকচারী ত্রতধারী আমি। পতিযোগা

নহি, বরাস্রনে—

নিফল নারীত্বকে ধিকার দিয়ে আশাহত প্রত্যাখ্যাত চিত্রাঙ্গদা মদনের পূজা করলেন এবং তাঁর বরে অপূর্ব সুন্দরী হ’য়ে অর্জুনকে আকৃষ্ট করলেন। অর্জুনের ত্রতভঙ্গ হ’ল। চিত্রাঙ্গদা মনে-প্রাণে জানেন এ প্রেম নয়, এ রূপাকর্ষণ এবং তাঁর এ-রূপও মিথ্যা ও অচিরস্থায়ী। তিনি জানেন অর্জুনের সমস্ত প্রেমনিবেদন ঐ মিথ্যা রূপের কাছে, তাঁর নারীত্বের কাছে নয়। এই বর তাঁর কাছে শাপ হ’য়ে এসেছে। তাই তাঁর অন্তরের আতনাদ শুনি—

ওগো, দেহের সোহাগে

অস্তুর হলিবে হিংসানলে, হেন শাপ

নরলোকে কে পেয়েছে আর। হে অতনু,

বর তব ফিরে লও।

চিত্রাঙ্গদা তাঁর নিজের ‘আমি’কে ফিরে পেতে চান। সেই তো সত্য।

এই ছয়রূপিণীর চেয়ে

শ্রেষ্ঠ আমি শতগুণে।

বীর্যবান কর্তব্যপরায়ণ অর্জুনের চিন্তেও অবসাদ এসেছে। তাঁর মোহ ভাঙতে আরম্ভ করেছে। তিনি বুঝতে পেরেছেন চিত্রাঙ্গদাকে তিনি পাননি, তাঁর রূপকে তিনি পেয়েছেন, তাঁর প্রেমের উদ্গাদনাকে পেয়েছেন। তিনি চিত্রাঙ্গদাকে বললেন—

সেই সত্য

কোথা আছে তোমার মাঝারে, দাও তারে।

আমায় যে-সত্য তাই লও।

অর্জুন চিত্রাঙ্গদাকে চান গৃহিণীরূপে, তাঁর পুত্রের জননীরূপে পেতে চান, কারণ সেখানেই প্রেমের ষথার্থ সার্থকতা। অসংযত রোমাঞ্চিক প্রেমে কল্যাণ নেই, এ-কথা রবীন্দ্রনাথ

‘শকুন্তল’ ও ‘চিত্রাঙ্গদা’ সম্পর্কেও বলেছেন। ‘চিত্রাঙ্গদা’ নৃত্যনাট্যের ভূমিকাতে রবীন্দ্রনাথ বলেছেন—

এই নাট্য কাহিনীতে আছে—
প্রথমে প্রেমের বন্ধন মোহাবেশে,
পরে তার মুক্তি সেই কুহক হতে
সহজ সত্যের নিরলংকৃত মহিমায়।

১৮নাবলীর ‘চিত্রাঙ্গদা’ কাব্যনাট্যের সূচনায় রবীন্দ্রনাথ বলেছেন—

“কেন জানি না হঠাৎ আমার মনে হল সুন্দরী যুবতী যদি অমৃতভব করে যে সে তার মনের মায়া দিয়ে প্রেমিকের হৃদয় ভুলিয়েছে তাহলে সে তার স্বরূপকেই আপন ভাগ্যের মুখ্য অংশে ভাগ বসাবার অভিযোগে সতিন বলে দিক্কার দিতে পারে। এ যে বাইরের জিনিস……। যদি তার অন্তরের মধ্যে যথার্থ চরিত্র শক্তি থাকে তবে মোহমুক্ত শক্তির দাহনই তার প্রেমিকের পক্ষে মহৎ লাভ, যুগল জীবনের জয়যাত্রার পথ।”

‘চিত্রাঙ্গদা’ দেবদত্ত রূপ ত্যাগ ক’রে নিজ মহিমায় প্রতিষ্ঠিত হলেন। বীর্যবান অর্জুন রামায়ণে হোন, চিত্রাঙ্গদা এ চান না। চিত্রাঙ্গদার রূপান্তরায়ণে রবীন্দ্রনাথ চিত্রাঙ্গদাকে কাম্যদায়ী নারীরূপে অঙ্কিত করেছেন। আধুনিক যুগচেতনা স্পষ্ট হ’য়ে উঠেছে চিত্রাঙ্গদা সংলাপাংশে। চিত্রাঙ্গদা আত্মপরিচয় দিচ্ছেন—

আমি চিত্রাঙ্গদা, আমি রাজেন্দ্রনন্দিনী।
নহি দেবী, নহি সাম্রাজ্ঞী নারী।
পূজা করি মোরে রাখিবে উদ্ধে—
সে নহি—নহি—
হেলা করি মোরে রাখিবে পিছে—
সে নহি—নহি—।
যদি পার্শ্বে রাখো মোরে
সংকটে সম্পদে
সম্মতি দাও যদি কঠিন ব্রতে
সহায় হতে
পাবে তবে তুমি চিনিতে মোরে।

‘পাকারীর আবেদন’ কাব্য-নাট্যের মূল মহাভারতের সভাপর্বে। কপট দ্যুতকীড়ায় প্রথম বার পরাজিত হবার পর ধৃতরাষ্ট্র তাদের সব কিছু ফিরিয়ে দিয়ে ইন্দ্রপ্রস্থে অশ্রুমতি দিলেন। তারা চ’লে যাবার পর কর্ণ ও শকুনির প্ররোচনায় দুর্যোধন

ধৃতরাষ্ট্রের কাছে পুনরায় পাণ্ডবদের সঙ্গে দ্যুতক্রীড়ার অহুমতি চাইলেন। ধৃতরাষ্ট্র পাণ্ডবদের ফিরিয়ে আনতে আদেশ দিলেন। তখন মহাপ্রাজ্ঞা গান্ধারী ভাবী অনিষ্ট আশঙ্কা ক'রে পুত্রস্নেহবশ রাজা ধৃতরাষ্ট্রকে বললেন—আপনি পুত্রগণের মত অহুমোদন করবেন না এবং দারুণ বংশনাশের কারণ হবেন না। পাণ্ডবেরা শাস্ত হয়েছে। কেন তাদের পুনরায় জুদ্ধ ক'রে তোলা? আমার বাক্যে এই কুলকলঙ্ক দুর্ঘোষনকে ত্যাগ করুন। ধৃতরাষ্ট্র গান্ধারীকে বললেন—এই বংশের সম্পূর্ণ ধ্বংস হোক, আমি বারণ করতে পারছি না। পুত্রেরা যা ইচ্ছা করে, তাই হোক। মূলের কাহিনী এই।

রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঘটনাকে পিছিয়ে নিয়েছেন। দ্বিতীয়বার কপট দ্যুতে পরাজিত হ'য়ে পাণ্ডবেরা যখন বনগমনে প্রস্তুত, রবীন্দ্রনাথের 'গান্ধারীর আবেদন' তখন আরম্ভ হয়েছে। রবীন্দ্রনাথের ধর্মবুদ্ধি ও গ্রায়-অগ্রায়বোধ সুবিদিত। গান্ধারীর চরিত্রকে 'গান্ধারীর আবেদনে' তিনি আদর্শরূপে অঙ্কিত করতে চেয়েছেন এবং মূলানুসরণ করেছেন। ধৃতরাষ্ট্রের নিকট গান্ধারীর আবেদন—গ্রায়ধর্মের জন্ত পুত্রের নির্বাসন-দণ্ড।

তুমি রাজা, রাজ-অধিরাজ

বিধাতার বাম হস্ত; ধর্মরক্ষা কাজ—

তোমা 'পরে সমর্পিত।

রাজা স্নেহাঙ্ক। গান্ধারীর আবেদন শুনলেন না। দুর্ঘোষনকে তিনি আশ্বাস দিয়েছেন—যতক্ষণ কুরুবংশ একেবারে ধ্বংস না হয়, সর্বনাশের সময় না আসে,

ততক্ষণ পিতৃস্নেহে কোরো না সংশয়,

আলিঙ্গন কোরো না শিথিল, ততক্ষণ

দ্রুত হস্তে লুটি লও সর্বস্বার্থ ধন।

রাজার নিকট গান্ধারীর আবেদন নিষ্ফল হ'ল। ধর্মজ্ঞা গান্ধারী বিধাতার উগ্ধত দণ্ড মাথা পেতে স্বীকার করলেন—

হে আমার

অশাস্ত হৃদয়, স্থির হও। নতশিরে

প্রতীক্ষা করিয়া থাকো বিধির বিধিরে

ধৈর্য ধরি।

মূলের গান্ধারীর আবেদন স্থূল ভাষায় সংক্ষেপে উক্ত। রবীন্দ্রনাথে তা সূক্ষ্মতর, বিস্তৃত ও মর্মস্পর্শী। বিধাতার কাছে শেষ বিচার প্রার্থনা গান্ধারীকে আরো মহৎ ক'রে তুলেছে। মূলে তা নেই। রবীন্দ্রনাথের গান্ধারীর এই কয়টি কথা—

নমো নমো বিদ্বেষের ভীষণা নিবৃতি।

শ্রশানের ভগ্নমাথা পরমা নিকৃতি।—

১০০ নাময় ।

১০১ চরিত্র-অঙ্কনে রবীন্দ্রনাথের কৃতিত্ব অসাধারণ । মূলে, এই প্রসঙ্গে, তাঁর

এইটুকুমাত্র পাই—

অন্তঃ কামঃ কুলশাস্ত্র ন শক্ৰামি নিবারিতুম্ ।

যথেষ্টস্তি তথৈবাস্ত প্রত্যগচ্ছন্ত পাণ্ডবাঃ ।

পুনর্দাতং প্রকুব্ধস্ত মামকাঃ পাণ্ডবৈঃ সহ ।

১০২ এই অন্ধ এবং স্নেহাঙ্ক পিতাকে এমনভাবে অঙ্কিত করেছেন যে আমাদের

১০৩ আকৃষ্ট হয় । এ-মানুষটি প্রকৃতপক্ষে ভাগ্যহত । নিজের জীবনে যা সার্থক

১০৪ তা পুত্রের জীবনে তা সার্থক হ'য়ে উঠুক, এ-কামনা কি তাঁর হৃদয়ের অন্তস্তলে ছিল

১০৫ । তিনি জানেন তাঁর পুত্র পাপী, অধর্মচারী, সে-জগতই তাকে আশ্রয় দেওয়া পিতার

১০৬

পাপী পুত্র ত্যজ্য বিধাতার

তাই তারে তাজিতে না পারি, আমি

তার একমাত্র ;.....

* * *

এক বিনাশের তলে তলাইয়া মরি

অকাতরে, অংশ লই তার দুর্গতির ।

অর্ধ ফল ভোগ করি তার দুর্মতির,

সেই তো সাধনা মোর ।

১০৭ মাহাত্ম্যের চরিত্র মহাভারতীয় দুর্ধোধন চরিত্রের সামগ্রিক পটভূমিকায় এবং আধুনিক কূট

১০৮ নীতির পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে কল্পিত হয়েছে । মূলে এই প্রসঙ্গে দুর্ধোধন সম্পর্কে এইটুকুমাত্র

১০৯ পাণ্ডবেরা প্রথমবার দ্যুতে পরাজিত হ'য়ে ফিরে যাবার পর কর্ণ এবং শকুনি তাঁকে

১১০ করলেন এই ব'লে যে পাণ্ডবরা ভীষণ ক্রুদ্ধ হ'য়ে ফিরে যাচ্ছে । বিশেষত

১১১ পিতার অপমান তারা কিছুতেই সহ করবে না এবং কিছুদিনের মধ্যেই বল সংগ্রহ

১১২ করে তারা প্রতিশোধ নেবে । দুর্ধোধন পিতার কাছে এসে এ-সব ব'লে পুনরায়

১১৩ ক্রোধের অহুমতি চাইলেন । রবীন্দ্রনাথ দুর্ধোধনকে সাম্রাজ্যলোলুপ কূটরাজনীতিবিদ

১১৪ হিসেবে যে-কোনো রাজা কিংবা রাজ্যশাসকদের প্রতীকরূপে অঙ্কিত করেছেন । মূলের

১১৫ কল্পনায় রবীন্দ্রনাথ প্রায় নতুন রূপ দিয়েছেন এই মহাভারতীয় ঘটনার । ভাষ্যমতীর

১১৬ গাফারীর উক্তি এবং ভাষ্যমতীর প্রত্যুত্তর নতুন সংযোজন ।

১১৭ 'মরকবাসে'র আখ্যানভাগ মহাভারতের বনপর্ব থেকে নেওয়া হয়েছে । সৌমক

১১৮ একশত স্ত্রী ছিলেন । বৃদ্ধ বয়সে জন্তু নামে তাঁর এক পুত্র হ'ল । একদিন এক

দিপীলিকা জন্তকে দংশন করল। তার আর্তনাদ এবং ভার্য্যাগণের বিলাপ শুনে রাজা অন্তঃপুরে গিয়ে পুত্রকে শাস্ত করলেন। পরে রাজসভায় এসে পুরোহিত ও মন্ত্রীগণকে বললেন—আমার শত ভার্য্যা থাকা সত্ত্বেও মাত্র একটি পুত্র হয়েছে। আমাদের প্রাণ এই একটি পুত্রকে আশ্রয় ক’রে আছে। আমার শতপুত্র হয়, এমন কোনো উপায় আছে কি? পুরোহিত বললেন—আমি এক যজ্ঞ করব। তাতে আপনার পুত্র জন্তকে আহুতি দিতে হবে, তাহলে আপনি শতপুত্র লাভ করবেন। অবশ্য জন্তও তার মাতৃগর্ভে আবার জন্মগ্রহণ করবে। রাজা সম্মত হলেন। যজ্ঞ আরম্ভ হ’ল। রাজ-ভার্য্যাগণ জন্তের হাত ধ’রে বিলাপ করতে লাগলেন। কিন্তু পুরোহিত তাকে জোর করে টেনে নিয়ে গিয়ে কাটলেন এবং তাকে আহুতি দিলেন। রাজার শত পুত্র হ’ল। জন্তও তার পূর্ব মাতৃগর্ভ থেকে জন্মগ্রহণ করল। তারপর সেই পুরোহিত আগে এবং রাজা পরে পরলোকে গমন করলেন। রাজা যখন পুণ্যকর্মের জন্ত স্বর্গে যাচ্ছেন তখন পুরোহিতকে নরক ভোগ করতে দেখে কারণ জিজ্ঞাসা করলেন। পুরোহিত বললেন, তিনি যে রাজার জন্ত যজ্ঞ করেছিলেন তারই ফলে তার নরক-ভোগ। তখন রাজা যমকে অনুরোধ করলেন পুরোহিতকে মুক্তি দিতে; তার বদলে রাজা নরক ভোগ করবেন। যম স্বীকৃত হলেন না। তখন সোমক বললেন—এই ঋত্বিক এবং আমি একই কর্ম করেছি। আমাদের পাপপুণ্যের ফল একই হোক। তখন যম সম্মত হলেন, এবং রাজা ও পুরোহিত একসঙ্গে নরক ভোগ ক’রে পাপমুক্ত হ’য়ে পুণ্যলোকে গমন করলেন। এই হ’ল মূল আখ্যান।

রবীন্দ্রনাথ মূল কাহিনী প্রায় অনুসরণ করেছেন। তিনি ঘটনা-বিস্তার করেছেন রাজা সোমকের স্বর্গগমন পথে যখন নরকের কাছে দেবরথ এসেছে। এই নরক-বর্ণনায় রবীন্দ্রনাথের ভাবকল্পনা নিজস্ব ও সুন্দর। তাছাড়া তিনি নরকচারী প্রেতগণকেও স্বকীয় কল্পনা দ্বারা সৃষ্টি করেছেন। মূলে তারা নেই। রবীন্দ্রনাথ সুসমৃদ্ধ ভাষায় মূল কাহিনীকে নাট্যরূপ দিয়েছেন। নাটকীয়তা পরিপুষ্ট হয়েছে প্রেত-কল্পনার দ্বারা। এই প্রেতগণ একদিন পৃথিবীতে ছিল। পাপের ফলে তাদের বর্তমান দশা। পৃথিবীর কথা শুনে তাদের বড়ো আশ্রয়, কারণ ‘পাতকের ইতিহাস। এখনো হৃদয়ে হানে কৌতুক উল্লাস’। মৃত্যুর পরেও সংস্কার যায় না। উপরে স্বর্গ। মর্ত হ’তে স্বর্গে যাবার পথপার্শ্বে নরক। প্রেতগণ বলছে—

নিত্য নন্দন-আলোক

দূর হতে দেখা যায়; স্বর্গযাত্রীগণে

অহোরাত্রি চলিয়াছে রথচক্রবনে

নিদ্রা তল্লা দূর করি ঈর্ষাজর্জরিত

আমাদের নেত্র হতে । নিম্নে মর্মরিত
ধরণীর বনভূমি ; সপ্ত পারাবার
চিরদিন করে গান, কলধ্বনি তার
হেথা হতে শুনা যায় ।

প্রভাতগঙ্গা সী প্রেতগণের সম্মুখে নৈরাশ ছাড়া কিছু নেই, তাই তাদের স্বর্গ এবং
স্বর্গীকে ঈর্ষা । কিন্তু সোমককে পেয়ে তারা স্থখী হয়েছে । তাদের অন্তর
হলায়ত । হয়তো বা একটু আশার আলো তারা দেখল । সোমককে তারা বলছে—

জয় জয় মহারাজ, পুণ্যফলভাগী ।
নিম্পাপ নরকবাগী, হে মহাবৈরাগী,
পাপীর অন্তরে করো গৌরবসঞ্চার
তব সহবাসে । করো নরক-উদ্ধার ।

প্রভাতগঙ্গা এই উক্তি দ্বারা সোমকের মহত্ত্ব আরো উজ্জ্বল হ'য়ে উঠেছে । রাজা
সোমকের চরিত্রেও রবীন্দ্রনাথ নতুন আলোকপাত করেছেন । ঋত্বিক রাজার প্রতি
বিদ্বেষের তাপ অন্তরে পোষণ ক'রে, সে রাজাকে যজ্ঞে ব্রতী করাল ।
পাপ অপরিসীম । প্রেতগণ পর্বস্ত তাকে ঘৃণা করে । মূলে আছে, ঋত্বিক নিজে
দিল । কিন্তু রবীন্দ্রনাথ কল্পনা করেছেন ঋত্বিক রাজাকে দিয়ে পুত্রকে হোমানলে
করাল । ঋত্বিকের পাপ আরো তীব্র হ'য়ে উঠল । রাজার অন্ততাপও
তার আতর্নাদ শুনি—

হায় পুত্র, হায় বংশ নবনীনির্মল,...
অগ্নিরে খেলনা সম পিতৃদান জ্ঞানি
ধরিলি হু-হাত মেলি বিধাসে নির্ভয়ে ।

রাজা মনে পাপবোধ তীব্রতর হ'য়ে উঠল—তিনি বলছেন,—

হে নরক, তোমার অনলে
হেন দাহ কোথা আছে যে জ্বিনিতে পারে
এ-অন্তরতাপ । আমি যাবো স্বর্গ দ্বারে !
দেবতা ভুলিতে পারে এ -পাপ আমার—
আমি কি ভুলিতে পারি সে-দৃষ্টি তাহার
সে-অস্তিম অভিমান !

রাজা মনে এ-পাপবোধ তীব্রতর ক'রে রবীন্দ্রনাথ রাজ-মহিমাকে মূল হ'তে অনেক
উজ্জ্বল করেছেন । ধর্ম রাজাকে বলেছেন অন্তরনরকানলে তার পাপের প্রায়শ্চিত্ত

হ'য়ে গিয়েছে ; কিন্তু শাস্ত্রজ্ঞান-অভিমানী ঋষিক মহাপাপী, যেহেতু তার মনে কোনো অনুতাপ জাগেনি। রাজা তবু ঋষিককে ত্যাগ করলেন না। রবীন্দ্রনাথ বহুকাল প্রচলিত কু-সংস্কারপূর্ণ অহুষ্ঠানকে সর্বথা নিন্দা করেছেন। 'নরকবাসে'ও এ-নিন্দা আছে।)

মহাভারতের উদ্যোগপর্ব থেকে 'কর্ণকুন্তী সংবাদে'র প্রসিদ্ধ কাহিনী গৃহীত। কুন্তী তাঁর পঞ্চপুত্রের বিপদ আশঙ্কা ক'রেই গঙ্গাতীরে গেলেন। কর্ণকে কুন্তী বললেন—তুমি কোন্তেয়, তুমি রাধা অধিরথের নন্দন নও। তুমি আমার কানীন পুত্র, তপনদেব তোমার পিতা। তুমি কবচকুণ্ডলধারী ও দুর্ধর্ষ হ'য়ে কুন্তিরাজের গৃহে ভূমিষ্ঠ হয়েছিলে। এই পরিচয় নিঃসংকোচে দিয়ে কুন্তী কর্ণকে দুর্ঘোধনের পক্ষ ত্যাগ ক'রে যুধিষ্ঠিরের পক্ষে আসতে অহরোধ জানালেন। কর্ণকে প্রলুব্ধ করতে আরো বললেন—তুমি পঞ্চভ্রাতা কর্তৃক পরিবেষ্টিত হ'য়ে মহাযজ্ঞ-বেদীতে দেবগণ-বেষ্টিত ব্রহ্মার ত্রায় শোভা পাবে। এই সময় কর্ণ শুনতে পেলেন তাঁর পিতা ভাস্কর বলছেন—তোমার জননী পৃথা সত্য কথা বলেছেন, তাঁর কথা শোনো। কর্ণ প্রলুব্ধ হলেন না, পিতার কথায়ও বিচলিত হলেন না। বরং কুন্তীকে বললেন—আপনার অহরোধ ধর্মসংগত নয়। আপনি আমায় ত্যাগ ক'রে ঘোর অত্মায় করেছেন ; আমার যশস্কীর্তি ও ক্ষত্রিয়ত্ব আপনার জন্তই নষ্ট হয়েছে। আমার কোন শত্রু এর চেয়ে অধিক অপকার করতে পারে? যখন দয়া করা উচিত ছিল তখন তা না ক'রে এখন নিজের হিতকামনায়ই এসেছেন। তারপর কর্ণ অম্লদাতা দুর্ঘোধনের পক্ষ ত্যাগ করা অকৃতজ্ঞতা হবে, শত্রুরা তাঁর নিন্দা করবে ইত্যাদি নানা কথা ব'লে কুন্তীকে আশ্বাস দিলেন—যুদ্ধে আমিই মরি বা অর্জুন মরেন, আপনি পঞ্চপুত্রের জননীই থাকবেন। কুন্তী অর্জুন সম্পর্কে বেশি উদ্বিগ্ন ছিলেন না। বাকি চারপুত্র জীবিত থাকবে এই আশ্বাস পেয়ে কর্ণকে আশীর্বাদ ক'রে চ'লে গেলেন। এই হ'ল মূল মহাভারতের সংক্ষিপ্ত কাহিনী।

রবীন্দ্রনাথ মূলকাহিনীকে মোটামুটি অহুমরণ করলেও তার রূপ এবং রস আমূল পরিবর্তন ক'রে অপূর্ব শ্রীমণ্ডিত এক কাব্যনাট্যের সৃষ্টি করেছেন। মূলে কর্ণের সঙ্গে কুন্তীর কথা আরম্ভ হয়েছে ঠিক মধ্যাহ্ন অতীত হবার পর। কর্ণ প্রাতঃকাল থেকে জপমগ্ন ছিলেন। কুন্তীকে তিনি পূর্ব থেকেই চিনতেন। উদ্যোগপর্বের ঘটনাকে রবীন্দ্রনাথ কর্ণপর্বে নিয়ে গেছেন। কর্ণ-কুন্তী সাক্ষাৎকার হচ্ছে গঙ্গাতীরে, রণভূমিতে—কর্ণ যখন কুরুসেনাপতি। রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঘটনার কালও পরিবর্তন করেছেন। কর্ণ তখন সঙ্ক্যাসবিতার পূজা করছেন। তাছাড়া কুন্তী কর্ণের পরিচিত নন। এ-পরিবর্তনের প্রয়োজন ছিল। মহাভারতের কুন্তী যত সহজে এবং নিঃসংকোচে কর্ণের জন্ম-বৃত্তান্ত

পেরেছেন, রবীন্দ্রনাথের কুন্তী তা পারেন না, যেহেতু রবীন্দ্রনাথ আধুনিক মানুষ। এত বড়ো কলঙ্কের ব্যাপারকে কোনো আধুনিক মাতাই নিজের গর্বের কাছে বলতে পারেন না। সে-জন্তু রবীন্দ্রনাথ বিস্তর কলাকৌশল প্রয়োগ করেছেন—সন্ধ্যার তিমির নিবিড় হ'য়ে না-আসা পর্যন্ত কুন্তী নিজ সন্তানের নিকট নাথক লজ্জার কাহিনী বলতে পারছেন না। ধীরে-ধীরে নিজেকে এবং কর্ণকে মর্মান্বিত ক'রে নিয়ে কুন্তী রহস্য ভেদ করলেন। মহাভারতের কুন্তীর মধ্যে এ-জটিলতা নেই, সহজ সরল স্পষ্ট ভাষায় তিনি তাঁর বক্তব্য বলতে পারলেন। রবীন্দ্রনাথ আধুনিক নন, তিনি রবীন্দ্রনাথ। তাঁর সূক্ষ্ম কোমল অন্তর্ভূতি এবং স্মার্তজিৎ কৌশল কুন্তীকে লজ্জানম্রা কুণ্ঠিতা নারীতে রূপান্তরিত করেছে। এ ছাড়া রবীন্দ্রনাথের কুন্তী অন্ততপ্তা। পরিত্যক্ত ও চিরভাগ্যহত সন্তানের জন্তু তাঁর প্রাণ কাঁদছে। তিনি নিজ পঞ্চপুত্রের জীবনরক্ষার্থ আসেননি, তাঁর অপরাধবোধও তাঁকে পীড়িত করেছে। মহাভারতে এ-বোধ নেই। কৃষ্ণের দৌত্য নিফল হবার পর বিহ্বল যখন কুন্তীকে দেখলেন—কুরু পাণ্ডবের যুদ্ধ অবশ্যস্তাবী, তখন কুন্তী পাণ্ডবদের প্রতি বিদ্বিষ্ট কর্ণকে প্রসন্ন করার আশায় গঙ্গাতীরে কর্ণের কাছে গেলেন।

মহাভারতে কর্ণ আজন্ম ভাগ্যহত। এমন ট্রাজিক চরিত্র পৃথিবীর ইতিহাসে আর খোঁজটি আছে কিনা সন্দেহ। উচ্চকূলে জন্মগ্রহণ ক'রেও ভাগ্যদোষে এক মহাবীরের মীশম বিড়ম্বিত হ'ল। রবীন্দ্রনাথ মূলের অনুসরণে কর্ণের সত্যসঙ্কতা, অন্নদাতার প্রতি কৃতজ্ঞতা, ত্যাগ ও তিতিক্ষা, কুন্তীর উপর দোষারোপ এবং অভিমান সবই বর্ণনা করেছেন। রবীন্দ্রনাথের কর্ণ কত মহৎ, কত ট্রাজিক হ'য়ে উঠেছেন! তাঁর ব্যথা, তাঁর অসহায়তা আমাদের তাঁর অন্তরাঙ্গ ক'রে তোলে। কুন্তীকে কর্ণ বললেন—

তোমার আহ্বানে

অস্তরায়ী জাগিয়াছে। নাহি বাজে কানে

যুদ্ধ ভেরী জয়শব্দ। মিথ্যা মনে হয়

রণহিংসা, বীরখ্যাতি, জয়গরাজয়।

কোথা বাবো, লয়ে চলো।

কুন্তী।

ওই পরপারে—

যেথা জ্বলিতেছে দীপ শুদ্ধ স্বকাবে—

পাগুর বালুকাতটে।

কর্ণ।

হোথা মাতৃহারা

মা পাইবে চিরদিন!.....

.....দেবি, কহ আরবার,

আমি পুত্র রূপ।

জীবনে যিনি সত্যকার মাঝে পেলেন না, তাঁর অন্তরাঙ্গার একী আকুল আর্তনাদ!
কুন্তীকে প্রত্যাখ্যান করলেন কর্ণ। তাঁর গৌরব তাঁর পালক মাতা-পিতাকে নিয়ে।

মাতঃ, স্নতপুত্র আমি, রাধা মোর মাতা
তার চেয়ে নাহি মোর অধিক গৌরব।

কর্ণ কত মহীয়ান হ'য়ে উঠলেন, যখন বললেন—

যে-পক্ষের পরাজয়

সে-পক্ষ ভাজিতে মোরে কোরো না আহ্বান।

আর তারপরে তাঁর ত্যাগবীর্যদীপ্ত—অথচ বিষাদময় মর্মভেদী কথা—

জয়ী হোক, রাজা হোক পাণ্ডব-সন্তান—
আমি রব নিঃশ্বল, হতাশের দলে।
জন্মরাত্রে ফেলে গেছো—মোরে ধরাভুলে
নামহীন, গৃহহীন। আজিও তেমনি
আমারে নির্মমচিত্তে তেয়োগো জননী,—
দীপ্তিহীন কীর্তিহীন—পরাসব্দ পূরে।
শুধু এই আশীর্বাদ দিয়ে যাও মোরে,
জয়লোভে ষশোলোভে রাজ্যলোভে, অয়ি,
বীরের সঙ্গতি হতে ভ্রষ্ট নাহি হই।

রবীন্দ্রনাথের কল্পনা, তাঁর অপূর্ব কাব্য-কৌশল এবং নাটকীয় বিস্তার কর্ণ এবং কুন্তীকে কেবল রূপান্তরিত করেনি, আধুনিক যুগোচিত করেছে।

এবার আমরা রবীন্দ্রনাথের 'ব্রাহ্মণ' কবিতা নিয়ে আলোচনা করব। উপনিষদের আখ্যান নিয়ে রবীন্দ্রনাথ এই কবিতাটি লিখেছেন। ছান্দোগ্য উপনিষদের ৪র্থ অধ্যায়ে ৪র্থ প্রপাঠকে সত্যকাম জ্বালের উপাখ্যান আছে। সত্যকাম তার মাতা জ্বালাকে বললেন—মা, আমি ব্রহ্মচর্য অবলম্বন ক'রে গুরুগৃহে বাস করতে চাই। আমি কোন গোত্রীয়? জ্বালা বললেন—তুমি কোন গোত্রীয় আমি তা জানি না। বহুজনের পরিচর্যানিরতা আমি যৌবনে তোমাকে পেয়েছিলাম। তুমি কোন গোত্রের তা আমি জানি না, তবে আমার নাম জ্বালা, তোমার নাম সত্যকাম। তুমি সত্যকাম জ্বাল ব'লে নিজের পরিচয় দিও।

(মূল সংস্কৃত—স। হৈনমুবাচ নাহমেতদ্ বেদ তাত যদগোব্রহ্মমসি বহুবং চরন্তী পরিচারিণী যৌবনে
জ্বালন্তে সাহমেতন্ন বেদ যদ্ গোব্রহ্মমসি জ্বালা তু নামাহমস্মি সত্যকামো নাম ত্বমসি স সত্যকাম
এব জ্বালো ব্রবীধা ইতি)

বহুহং চরন্তী পরিচারিণী যৌবনে—এ-অংশের শব্দর-অনুমোদিত ব্যাখ্যা এই—‘আমার যৌবনকালে স্বামী-গৃহে নিরন্তর কর্মব্যস্ত থাকায় গোত্র জিজ্ঞাসার অবসর পাইনি। এখন যৌবনেই তোমার পিতার মৃত্যু হওয়ায় শোকাভিভূত আমি অপরের নিকটও গোত্র জিজ্ঞাসা করিনি।’ রবীন্দ্রনাথ এই অংশের অন্তরূপ অর্থ ক’রে ‘ব্রাহ্মণ’ কবিতা রচনা করেছেন।

মূলের কাহিনী তারপর এইরূপ। সত্যকাম গৌতমের নিকট গিয়ে বললেন—আমি ব্রাহ্মচর্য্য বাস করব। গৌতম জিজ্ঞাসা করলেন, তুমি কোন গোত্রীয়। সত্যকাম বললেন—আমি কোন গোত্রীয় জানি না, মাতাকে জিজ্ঞাসা করেছিলাম, তিনি বললেন—বহুহং চরন্তী...ইত্যাদি। স্মৃতরাং মহাশয়, আমি সত্যকাম জাবাল। গৌতম তখন বললেন—এরূপ বাক্য ব্রাহ্মণ ছাড়া আর কেউ বলতে পারে না। হে সৌম্য, সমিধ-আহরণ কর, আমি তোমাকে উপনীত করব। কারণ তুমি সত্য হ’তে ভ্রষ্ট হওনি।

শব্দরানুমোদিত ব্যাখ্যাকে অনুসরণ না-ক’রে রবীন্দ্রনাথ কাহিনীকে একটু জটিল ক’রে তুলেছেন সত্য, কিন্তু তাতে কাহিনীর ষে-মূল দার্শনিক তত্ত্ব—সত্যই একমাত্র বস্তু এবং তাই মানুষকে ব্রাহ্মণ ক’রে তোলে, তা উজ্জলতর ভাবে প্রকাশিত হয়েছে। তাছাড়া এই পরিবর্তনের জগুই উপাখ্যান-বর্ণনায় নাটকীয়ত্ব বেশি স্পষ্ট হ’য়ে উঠেছে। আশ্রমের ভাবগম্ভীর পরিবেশটি ভাষা এবং বর্ণনার বৈশিষ্ট্যে অত্যন্ত সজীব হ’য়ে ফুটে উঠেছে।

রবীন্দ্রনাথ বৌদ্ধপুরাণ এবং জাতকের কাহিনীকে অবলম্বন ক’রেও নাটক এবং কবিতা রচনা করেছেন। আমরা এর কয়েকটির আলোচনা করব। ‘মালিনী’ নাটকের মূল কাহিনী রাজেন্দ্রলাল মিত্র সম্পাদিত ‘The Sanskrit Buddhist Literature of Nepal’ গ্রন্থের ‘মহাবস্তুবদান’ অধ্যায় থেকে গৃহীত। মূল কাহিনীটি এইরূপ—এক প্রত্যেক-বুদ্ধ বারাণসীতে ভিক্ষার জন্তু গিয়েছিলেন। ভিক্ষা না-পেয়ে যখন তিনি ঘিরে আসছেন তখন এক বালিকা তাঁকে সেবা করল। তিনি সন্তুষ্ট হলেন। তাঁর মৃত্যুর পর তাঁর সমাধির উপর বালিকাটি একটি স্তূপ রচনা ক’রে মাল্য এবং গন্ধের দ্বারা তাকে সজ্জিত রাখত। বালিকা প্রার্থনা করত পরজন্মে যেন সে পুষ্পমালায় শোভিত হ’য়ে জন্মগ্রহণ করে। পরজন্মে সে মাল্যচিহ্ন-শোভিত হ’য়ে বারাণসীরাজ কুকির কণ্ঠ্যরূপে জন্মগ্রহণ করল। তার নাম হ’ল মালিনী।

একদিন মালিনী কাণ্ডপ ও তাঁর শিষ্যবৃন্দকে ভোজ্য দ্বারা তৃপ্ত করল। এতে ব্রাহ্মণরা ক্রুদ্ধ হলেন। তাঁরা রাজাকে দিয়ে মালিনীর নির্বাসন-দণ্ডাজ্ঞা করালেন। মালিনী এক সপ্তাহের সময় চাইলেন এবং এরই মধ্যে মালিনীর ভ্রাতাগণ, রাজ্যের সেনাপতি এবং নাগরিকগণ সকলেই মালিনীকে তাঁদের আধ্যাত্মিক ভ্রাতারূপে স্বীকার ক’রে আর্ষধর্ম গ্রহণ করল। তারা ব্রাহ্মণদের বিরুদ্ধে অভিযান করল। ব্রাহ্মণরা ভীত

হ'য়ে রাজার শরণ নিলেন। মালিনীর নির্বাসন-দণ্ডাজ্ঞা প্রত্যাহত হ'ল। কিন্তু ব্রাহ্মণগণ সমস্ত ঘটনার মূল স্বরূপ কাশ্যপকে হত্যা করতে সৈন্ত পাঠাল। সেই সৈন্তরা এবং অগ্র অনেক আর্থধর্মে দীক্ষিত হ'ল। ব্রাহ্মণরা তখন নিজেরাই অস্ত্রশস্ত্রে সজ্জিত হ'য়ে কাশ্যপের আশ্রমের দিকে যাত্রা করল। কাশ্যপ পৃথ্বীদেবীকে আবাহন করলেন। পৃথ্বীদেবী একটি তালগাছ উন্মূলিত ক'রে ব্রাহ্মণদের পিষে মারলেন।

‘মালিনী’ নাটকে মালিনী কাশীরাজকন্যা। সে কাশ্যপের কাছ থেকে নতুন ধর্মগ্রন্থ গ্রহণ করেছে। ব্রাহ্মণগণ এতে অসন্তুষ্ট হ'য়ে রাজাকে দিয়ে তার নির্বাসন-দণ্ডাজ্ঞা করিয়েছে। তাতে রাজ্যের বহু লোক মালিনীর প্রতি সহানুভূতিসম্পন্ন হয়েছে। রবীন্দ্রনাথ মূল থেকে এইটুকু মাত্র নিয়েছেন। এ-নাটকের ভাব-সম্পর্কে রবীন্দ্রনাথ রবীন্দ্র রচনাবলীর ‘মালিনী’র সূচনায় বলেছেন, “আমার মনের মধ্যে ধর্মের প্রেরণা তখন গৌরীশঙ্করের উদ্ভুদ্ধ শিখরে শুভ্রনির্মল তুষারপুষ্পের মতো নির্মল নির্বিকল্প হ'য়ে স্তব্ধ ছিল না, সে বিচলিত হ'য়ে মানবলোকে বিচিত্র মঙ্গলরূপে মৈত্রীরূপে আপনাকে প্রকাশ করতে আরম্ভ করেছে।... সত্য যার স্বভাব, যে-মানুষের অন্তরে অপরিমেয় কল্পনা, তার অন্তঃকরণ থেকে এই পরিপূর্ণ মানব দেবতার আবির্ভাব অগ্র মানুষের চিত্তে প্রতিফলিত হ'তে থাকে। সকল আনুষ্ঠানিক, সকল পৌরাণিক ধর্ম-জটিলতা ভেদ ক'রে তবেই এর মথার স্বরূপ প্রকাশ হ'তে পারে।”

রবীন্দ্রনাথ তাঁর নাটকে এই ভাবকেই রূপ দিয়েছেন। এ-নাটক রচনা প্রসঙ্গে তিনি একটি স্বপ্নের কথাও উল্লেখ করেছেন, “এমন সময়ে স্বপ্ন দেখলুম যেন আমার সামনে একটা নাটকের অভিনয় হচ্ছে। বিষয়টা একটু বিদ্রোহের চক্রান্ত। দুই বন্ধুর মধ্যে এক বন্ধু কর্তব্যবোধে সেটা ফাঁস করে দিয়েছেন রাজার কাছে। বিদ্রোহী বন্দী হ'য়ে এলেন রাজার সামনে। মৃত্যুর পূর্বে তাঁর শেষ ইচ্ছা পূর্ণ করবার জন্তে তাঁর বন্ধুকে যেই তার কাছে এনে দেওয়া হ'ল, দুই হাতের শিকল তাঁর মাথায় মেরে বন্ধুকে দিলেন ভূমিসাৎ ক'রে।...অনেক কাল এই স্বপ্ন আমার জাগ্রত মনের মধ্যে সঞ্চার করেছে। অবশেষে অনেক দিন পরে এই স্বপ্নের স্মৃতি নাটিকার আকার নিয়ে শাস্ত হ'ল।” স্বপ্ন থেকে পাওয়া এই দুই বন্ধু—সুপ্রিয় এবং ক্ষেমঙ্কররূপে রবীন্দ্রনাথের সৃষ্টি। মূলে ব্রাহ্মণদের বিরোধের কথা আছে। এই দুই বন্ধুই নাটকে ব্রাহ্মণদের নেতা। ক্ষেমঙ্কর ও সুপ্রিয় অকৃত্রিম বন্ধু, কিন্তু দুজনের প্রকৃতি বিভিন্ন। ক্ষেমঙ্কর প্রাণবান, প্রবল; সুপ্রিয় কোমল, অনুভূতিপ্রবণ। ক্ষেমঙ্কর যখন সৈন্তসংগ্রহে গেল তখন সুপ্রিয় ধীরে-ধীরে মালিনীর প্রতি এবং তার নতুন ধর্মের প্রতি আকৃষ্ট হ'ল। মালিনীর প্রতি প্রেমের ফলে বন্ধুর প্রতি বিশ্বাসঘাতকতা ক'রে সুপ্রিয় রাজার কাছে ষড়যন্ত্রের কথা ফাঁস ক'রে দিল। ক্ষেমঙ্কর দেশে ফেরার সঙ্গে-সঙ্গে বন্দী হ'ল এবং মৃত্যুর পূর্বে বন্ধুকে দেখতে ইচ্ছা করল।

১১৬ এলে দুই বকুর মধ্যে যে-কথার বিনিময় হ'ল তাও দুজনের প্রকৃতিরই
বক্তৃত্বের অকৃত্রিমতায় ক্ষেমকরের সন্দেহ ছিল না, কিন্তু বকু বিশ্বাসঘাতকতার
১১৭ কক—এই জন্তেই ক্ষেমকর হাতের শিকল দিয়ে সুপ্রিয়ের মস্তকে আঘাত
১১৮ করল। রাজা ক্ষেমকরের হত্যাদণ্ডের আদেশ দিলেন, কিন্তু মালিনীর
১১৯ প্রাণে ক্ষেমকর মুক্ত হ'ল। ক্ষেমকরের মুক্তিদানে মালিনীর এই অভিপ্রায়
১২০ ক্ষেমকর অহুতাপানলে দগ্ধ হ'য়ে বকুহত্যার প্রায়শ্চিত্ত করুক। নাটকের
১২১ মূলের কাশ্যপ-হত্যার চেষ্টা এবং পৃথ্বীর তালগাছ উন্মূলিত ক'রে
১২২ অলৌকিক ঘটনা নাটকে নেই।

১২৩ তিনটি চরিত্র—ক্ষেমকর, সুপ্রিয় এবং মালিনী—প্রধান। মালিনীকে
১২৪ নাটকের গতি এবং ট্রাজিক পরিণতি। দুই বকুর মধ্যে প্রেম অক্ষুণ্ণ থাকে
১২৫ মালিনীর বিরোধে যে-নাটকীয় দ্বন্দ্ব সৃষ্টি হয়েছে, সুপ্রিয়-হত্যায় তার শোচনীয় ও
১২৬ পরিণতি। মূলে যে-ভাবটি একেবারে অরূপস্থিত রবীন্দ্রনাথ সম্ভবত বৌদ্ধধর্মের
১২৭ প্রতি—প্রেম-মৈত্রী-অহিংসার তত্ত্ব—ক্ষেমকরের মুক্তি দ্বারা প্রকাশ করতে
১২৮ এ-নাট্যরূপায়ণে রবীন্দ্রনাথের কৃতিত্ব অসামান্য এবং এর নাট্যরূপ সম্পর্কে
১২৯ বলেছেন—“মালিনীর নাট্যরূপ সংঘত, সংহত এবং দেশকালের ধারায়
১৩০”

১৩১ নাটকের মূল কুশজাতক। কাহিনীটি এইরূপ : মল্লরাজের জ্যেষ্ঠ পুত্র কুশ।
১৩২ প্রাণ, কিন্তু কুরূপ। মল্লরাজকন্যা প্রভাবতী অপূর্ব সুন্দরী। কুশের সঙ্গে তার
১৩৩ প্রেম। কুশের মাতা স্বামী-স্ত্রীকে দিনের বেলায় দেখা করতে দিতেন না, পাছে
১৩৪ স্বামীর কুরূপ দেখে তাকে ঘৃণা করে। কিন্তু আটকে রাখা গেল না। দেখা
১৩৫ প্রভাবতী স্বামীর কুরূপ দেখে তাকে ত্যাগ ক'রে পিঞ্জালয়ে চ'লে গেল। কুশ
১৩৬ নীচবৃত্তি করতে গেলেন এবং সেখানে প্রভাবতীর পাণিপ্রার্থী রাজাদের হাত
১৩৭ থেকে উদ্ধার ক'রে পত্নীপ্রেম লাভ করলেন।

১৩৮ কাহিনীর প্রভাবতী ‘রাজা’ নাটকে সুদর্শনা। ‘রাজা’ নাটকেও রানী রাজাকে
১৩৯ দেখতে পান না। প্রভাবতী স্বামীর কুরূপ দেখে চ'লে যায়; ‘রাজা’
১৪০ রানী সুদর্শনা অগ্নিকাণ্ডের সময় মুহূর্তের জন্য রাজার ভীষণ কুরূপ দেখে
১৪১ চ'লে গেলেন। বহু রাজা তার পাণিপ্রার্থী হলেন।...সর্বশেষে রাজার সঙ্গে
১৪২ বিবাহ হল। মূল কাহিনীর সঙ্গে এই যোগ আছে। ক্ষুদ্র কুশজাতকের ঘটনা
১৪৩ রবীন্দ্রনাথ ‘রাজা’ নাটকের রূপ দিয়েছেন। কিন্তু মূল থেকে তা একেবারে
১৪৪ দূরে গেছে—কেবল রূপায়ণে নয়, তত্ত্বও। প্রভাবতী স্বামীর বাইরের রূপটাই
১৪৫ তার অন্তরের রূপ দেখল যেদিন তার স্বামী তার পাণিপ্রার্থী রাজাদের হাত

থেকে খসুসকে উদ্ধার করেছিল। স্বামীৰ প্ৰতি যে-কৃতজ্ঞতা বোধ জাগল তা থেকেই স্বামীৰ প্ৰতি প্ৰেমের সঞ্চার হ'ল। তার চোখে স্বামী সুন্দর হ'য়ে উঠল।

‘ৰাজা’ নাটকে ৰানী সূদৰ্শনা দিনের আলোতে ৰাজাকে দেখতে চান। তার আকাঙ্ক্ষা ৰাজার ৰূপের জ্ঞা। এই প্ৰলোভনেই তিনি ছদ্মবেশধাৰী সূৰ্ণকে ৰাজা ব'লে মনে করেছিলেন। কিন্তু সত্যই যেদিন ৰাজার বাইরের ৰূপ দেখলেন, সেদিন ভয়ে-ঘৃণায় তিনি পিত্ৰালয়ে চ'লে গেলেন। কিন্তু সেখানে তার প্ৰায়শ্চিত্ত আৰম্ভ হ'ল। দুঃখের তপস্কার ভিতর দিয়ে ৰানী সত্যদৃষ্টি লাভ করলেন। এই সত্যদৃষ্টি প্ৰেমের দৃষ্টি। ৰাজার সঙ্গে তাঁর মিলন ঘটল। প্ৰেম-দৃষ্টি ছাড়া অন্তলোকের, অন্ধকারের ৰূপ ‘জানা’ যায় না। সূদৰ্শনার এই দৃষ্টি ছিল না ব'লেই তিনি ৰাজাকে আলোতে দেখতে চেয়েছিলেন। এ-তত্ত্ব ববীজ্ঞনাথের কোনো-কোনো কবিতায় পূৰ্বে আভাসিত। ‘ৰাজা’ নাটকে বাইরের জগৎ থেকে অন্তৰ্জগতে প্ৰয়াণ। এ-প্ৰয়াণ আধ্যাত্মিক এবং প্ৰয়াণপথের একমাত্র সম্বল প্ৰেম। নাটকের সৰ্বশেষে ৰাজার সঙ্গে ৰানীর মিলন ঘটল ৰাত্ৰিশেষে—সূৰ্য তখন উঠেছে। এই সূৰ্য-ওঠা সংকেতময়। ৰানীর অন্তরে যে-অবিজ্ঞা ছিল প্ৰায়শ্চিত্ত ও দুঃখের তপস্কার দ্বারা তা দূর হ'য়ে গেছে। সূৰ্যালোক সেখানে প্ৰবেশ করেছে। এ-সূৰ্যালোক প্ৰেম। দুঃখের ভিতর দিয়েই আমরা ভগবানকে পাই যখন প্ৰেমালোকে আমাদের হৃদয় উদ্ভাসিত হয়। ৰানীর কাছে ৰাজা আজ তাই অসুপম।

‘ৰাজা’ নাটকের তত্ত্বই আরো বিশ্লেষিত হয়েছে ‘শাপমোচন’ কবিতা এবং ‘শাপ-মোচন’ নৃত্যনাটো। নাটকের নায়ক-নায়িকা সেখানে বদলে গেছেন। তালভঞ্জেৰ অপরাধে প্ৰায়শ্চিত্ত করতে গঙ্ঘৰ্ব সৌরসেন কুশ্ৰী দেহ নিয়ে জন্মগ্ৰহণ করলেন গাঙ্ঘার ৰাজগৃহে। তাঁর নাম হ'ল অৰুণেশ্বৰ। তাঁর স্ত্ৰী মধুশ্ৰী প্ৰায়শ্চিত্তের অৰ্ধভাগিনী হ'তে কমলিকা নামে মদ্রৰাজকন্তা হ'য়ে জন্মগ্ৰহণ করলেন। অৰুণেশ্বৰের সঙ্গে কমলিকাৰ বিবাহ হ'ল, কিন্তু ‘নিৰ্বাণদীপ অন্ধকার ঘরেই প্ৰতি ৰাত্ৰে স্বামীৰ কাছে বধু সমাগম;’ বধু তাতে স্থখী নয়। অৰুণেশ্বৰ বললেন—চৈত্ৰ সংক্ৰান্তিৰ দিনে নাগকেশবের বনে সখাদের সঙ্গে তাঁর নৃত্যের দিন। ৰানী যেন তাঁকে সেখানে দেখেন। ৰানী বললেন—নাচ তো দেখলাম, কিন্তু দলের মধ্যে একজন কুশ্ৰী কেন? ৰানী রসবিকৃতি সহিতে পাবেন না। তিনি সূৰ্যোদয়ের মুহূৰ্তে ৰাজাকে দেখতে চাইলেন। দেখা হ'ল। কুশ্ৰী ৰাজাকে দেখে কমলিকা ৰাজগৃহ ত্যাগ ক'রে দূরে চ'লে গেলেন বনের মধ্যে যেখানে যুগ্মায় জ্ঞা নিৰ্জন গৃহ আছে।

তারপর বিরহের তপস্কা। ‘বীণায় বাজে পৰজের বিহ্বল মিড়।’ কমলিকা আপন মনে বলে—ওগো কাতর, ওগো হতাশ আর ডেকো না, আর দেৰি নেই, দেৰি নেই। ‘বীণা থামল। / মহিষী ধমকে দাড়াল। / ৰাজা বললে—ভয় কোৰো না প্ৰিয়ে, ভয় কোৰো

‘আমার কিছু ভয় নেই, তোমারই জয় হ’ল।’ মহিষী আচলের আড়াল থেকে
 ৭৭ ক’রে রাজার মুখের কাছে ধরলেন। এ-প্রদীপ সংকেতময়। এ-সংকেত
 ৭৮ উদ্ভাসনে। পলক পড়ে না চোখে। ব’লে উঠল, ‘প্রভু আমার, প্রিয়
 ৭৯ কী সুন্দর রূপ তোমার।’ কমলিকার অন্তর্দৃষ্টি খুলেছে বিরহের তপশ্যায়।
 ৮০ পেলে—সুন্দর-অসুন্দর নিয়েই পরিপূর্ণ জগৎ। যখন হৃদয়ে করুণা জেগে
 ৮১ জেগে ওঠে, তখনই অসুন্দরের মধ্যে সুন্দরকে, সত্যকে দেখা যায়।
 ৮২ শাপমোচন’র ভূমিকায় রবীন্দ্রনাথ বলেছেন—“যে-বৌদ্ধ-আখ্যান অবলম্বন ক’রে
 ৮৩ নাটক রচিত তারই আভাসে ‘শাপমোচন’ কথিকাটি রচনা করা হ’ল।” কুল
 ৮৪ ক’-কাহিনী নিয়ে রবীন্দ্রনাথ তখনাট্য ‘রাজা’ রচনা করেছিলেন এবং তার
 ৮৫ করলেন ‘শাপমোচন’। ‘শাপমোচন’ ছন্দঃপাতন অপরাধের ক্ষয় দেখানো
 ৮৬। সর্ববিধে নিত্যবিলসিত চিরসুন্দরের ছন্দে কোনো পতন নেই; সে-পতন
 ৮৭ তার অজ্ঞানতার দ্বারা। সুন্দর-অসুন্দরের মধ্যে বিরোধ তখনই দূর হ’লে
 ৮৮ সুন্দর-অসুন্দরকে একই ছন্দোবদ্ধ ব’লে মনে বোধ জাগে। যশু ছায়ামৃতং যশু
 ৮৯

৯০ ‘কথা ও কাহিনী’র ‘পরিশোধ’ কবিতা নৃত্যনাট্য ‘শ্রামা’র পূর্বরূপ। মূল কাহিনী
 ৯১ বিগলিত থেকে গৃহীত। কাহিনীটি এইরূপ। তক্ষশিলাবাসী বণিক বজ্রসেন বারাণসীতে
 ৯২ অর্থ বিক্রয় করতে এসেছিল। পথে তার সর্বস্ব অপহৃত হয়। দুর্ভাগ্যক্রমে
 ৯৩ অবস্থায় সে এক মন্দিরে চোর ব’লে ধৃত হয় এবং তার প্রাণদণ্ডের আদেশ হয়।
 ৯৪ শ্রেষ্ঠা বারাসনা শ্রামা তাকে তখন দেখে এবং তার প্রতি আকৃষ্ট হয়। পরে
 ৯৫ ইচ্ছায় এবং তার পরিচারিকার কৌশলে শ্রামার রূপমুগ্ধ এক শ্রেষ্ঠপুত্র
 ৯৬ পনের পরিবর্তে নিজের অজ্ঞাতসারে প্রাণদণ্ডে দণ্ডিত হয়, এবং বজ্রসেন মুক্তি লাভ
 ৯৭। বজ্রসেন তার মুক্তির জন্য শ্রামার নিকট কৃতজ্ঞ ছিল, কিন্তু নির্দোষ শ্রেষ্ঠপুত্রের
 ৯৮ কারণ জ্ঞানার পর থেকে তার মনে শান্তি ছিল না। সে একদিন শ্রামাকে গলা
 ৯৯ লে ডুবিয়ে রেখে এল। কিন্তু শ্রামা মরেনি। তার মা কাছে ছিল, তার
 ১০০ সে বেঁচে উঠল এবং এক ভিক্ষুণীর সাহায্যে বজ্রসেনের কাছে প্রেম নিবেদন করল।
 ১০১ মূল কাহিনীতে শ্রেষ্ঠপুত্রের প্রাণদণ্ড তার অজ্ঞাতসারে ঘটেছিল। কিন্তু ‘পরিশোধ’
 ১০২ তায় এবং নৃত্যনাট্য ‘শ্রামা’র শ্রেষ্ঠপুত্র উত্তীয় শ্রামার অনুনয়ে এবং ব্যর্থ প্রেমের
 ১০৩ ঠরূপেই স্বেচ্ছায় প্রাণদণ্ড গ্রহণ করেছে। মূলের সঙ্গে কবিতা এবং নৃত্যনাট্যের

• কুশজাতক কাহিনী : রবীন্দ্রজীবনী, ত্রিপ্রভাতকুমার মুখোপাধ্যায়; রবীন্দ্রনাট্যগ্রন্থাবলী (২য় খণ্ড)
 রবীন্দ্রনাথ বিদ্যা

এইটুকু প্রভেদ। নৃত্যনাট্যে রবীন্দ্রনাথ মূল কাহিনীর মর্মমূলে রূপান্তর ঘটিয়েছেন; কবিতায় তা এত স্পষ্ট হ'য়ে ওঠেনি। মূলে শ্রামার প্রতি বজ্রসেনের প্রেম নেই, কৃতজ্ঞতা আছে। কিন্তু যখন শ্রেষ্ঠিপুত্রের মৃত্যুর কারণ জানল তখন শ্রামার প্রতি তার ঘৃণা জন্মাল। নৃত্যনাট্যে বজ্রসেন শ্রামার প্রতি আকৃষ্ট, কিন্তু উত্তীযের মৃত্যু প্রেমে ব্যবধান সৃষ্টি করেছে। বজ্রসেনের মানসিক ঘন্দ নৃত্যনাট্যে সুস্পষ্ট। শ্রামাকে সে দৃণাবশত আঘাত করেছে, ত্যাগ করেছে, কিন্তু বজ্রসেন জানে শ্রামার প্রেম কত প্রাণবন্ত। প্রেমের জগৎ সে কী না করতে পারে! এ-প্রেমকে গ্রহণ করতে এবং শ্রামাকে ক্ষমা করতে না-পারার জগৎ বজ্রসেনের অন্তশোচনার অস্ত নেই। বজ্রসেন চরিত্রের এই ঘন্দ নৃত্যনাট্যকে আকর্ষণীয় করেছে। শ্রামা পাপী, উত্তীযের মৃত্যুর কারণ সে। কিন্তু তার জীবনদর্শন প্রেম ছাড়া কিছু জানে না, প্রেমের কাছে গায়-অন্ডায় ধর্মধর্ম কিছুই নেই। শ্রামার এই সর্বপ্রাণী প্রেম পাঠককে তার প্রতি তদায় ক'রে তোলে বৈকি। ‘শ্রামা’ নাটকের চূড়ান্ত ট্রাজেডি রবীন্দ্রনাথের বিশ্বয়কর সৃষ্টি।

‘চণ্ডালিকা’র ভূমিকায় রবীন্দ্রনাথ লিখেছেন—“রাজেন্দ্রলাল মিত্র কর্তৃক সম্পাদিত নেপালী-বৌদ্ধ সাহিত্যে শাদূল-কর্ণাবদানের যে-সংক্ষিপ্ত বিবরণ দেওয়া হয়েছে, তাই থেকে এ-নাটিকার গল্পটি গৃহীত। গল্পের ঘটনাস্থল আবিস্তী। প্রভু বুদ্ধের প্রিয়শিষ্য আনন্দ একদিন এক গৃহস্থ বাড়িতে আহ্নার শেষ ক'রে বিহারে ক্ষেবরার সময় তৃষ্ণা বোধ করলেন। দেখতে পেলেন এক চণ্ডালের কন্যা, নাম প্রকৃতি, কুয়ো থেকে জল তুলেছে। তার কাছ থেকে জল চাইলে সে দিল। তাঁর রূপ দেখে মেয়েটি মুগ্ধ হ'ল। তাকে পাবার অতঃকোনা উপায় না-দেখে মায়ের কাছে সাহায্য চাইল। মা তার জাহ্ন বিজ্ঞা জানত।... আনন্দ এই জাহ্নর শক্তি রোধ করতে পারলেন না। রাত্রে তার বাড়িতে এসে উপস্থিত। তিনি বেদীর ওপর আসন গ্রহণ করলেন। প্রকৃতি তাঁর জন্ত বিছানা পাততে লাগল। আনন্দের মনে তখন পরিতাপ উপস্থিত হ'ল। পরিজ্ঞানের জন্ত ভগবানের কাছে প্রার্থনা জানিয়ে কঁাদতে লাগলেন। ভগবান বুদ্ধ তাঁর অলৌকিক শক্তিতে শিষ্যের অবস্থা জেনে একটি বৌদ্ধমন্ত্র আবৃত্তি করলেন। সেই মন্ত্রের জোরে চণ্ডালীর বশীকরণ বিজ্ঞা দুর্বল হ'য়ে গেল এবং আনন্দ মঠে ফিরে এলেন।”

এই গল্পের সূত্র নিয়ে রবীন্দ্রনাথ ‘চণ্ডালিকা’ রচনা করলেন। অস্পৃশ্য চণ্ডাল-কন্যা প্রকৃতির হাত থেকে বুদ্ধের প্রিয়শিষ্য জল গ্রহণ করেছেন, এতে স্বাভাবিকভাবে প্রশ্ন জাগল: মাতৃষে-মাতৃষে এত ভেদ কেন? কেন এই পরস্পর ঘৃণা, এই বিরোধ? এ-জিজ্ঞাসা চিন্তাশীল উদারহৃদয় মানবের চিরন্তন জিজ্ঞাসা। ভারতবর্ষের এ তো সনাতন সমগ্রা। যুগে-যুগে ভারতের মহামানবগণ এই নির্দাক্ষণ পাপ দূর করতে চেষ্টা করেছেন। ‘চণ্ডালিকা’র ঘটনা যুগোচিত।

মানাটা 'চণ্ডালিকা'য় মূল কাহিনীকে রবীন্দ্রনাথ অন্তরূপ দিয়ে তবু এবং নাটকীয়তায়
 মন্দর ক'রে তুলেছেন। মন্ত্র প'ড়ে চণ্ডালিকা প্রকৃতির মা যখন দর্পণে আনন্দের
 দেখতে তাকে বলল, প্রকৃতি দেখতে পেল কী যন্ত্রণাই আনন্দ পাচ্ছেন, তাঁর
 মন্দির উজ্জল মূর্তি ম্লান হ'য়ে গেছে। এ-আনন্দকে তো সে পেতে চায় না। এ
 প্রশ্ন করল তার মা, এ-কথা বলতে লাগল প্রকৃতি, যদিও তারই প্রয়োচনায় তার
 হাতে হাত দিয়েছিল।

ফিরিয়ে নে তোর মন্ত্র
 এখনি এখনি এখনি।
 ও রাক্ষুসী, কী করলি তুই

 কোথা আমার সেই দীপ্ত সমুচ্ছল
 শুভ্র স্ননির্মল
 হৃদয় স্বর্গের আলো।

 সব বাক, সব বাক—
 অপমান করিস নে বীরের—
 জয় হোক তাঁর—

প্রবেশ করলেন। প্রকৃতি আর্তকণ্ঠে বলল—

প্রভু, এসেছ উদ্ধারিতে আমার
 দিলে তার এত মূল্য,
 নিলে তার এত দুঃখ।
 ক্ষমা করো, ক্ষমা করো—
 মাটিতে টেনেছি তোমারে
 এনেছি নিচে,
 ধূলি হতে তুলি নাও আমার
 তব পুণ্যলোকে।

মোহ ভেঙে গেছে, রূপাকর্ষণ আর নেই। আনন্দের সত্যরূপকে সে হৃদয়ের
 অর্পণ করছে। আনন্দ আশীর্বাদ করলেন—কল্যাণ হোক তব, কল্যাণী। মূল
 অতিক্রম ক'রে কবিমানস কণ্ঠ উর্ধ্বলোকে বিচরণ করছে তা এই
 লক্ষ্য করা যায়।

শতকের গল্প নিয়ে 'পূজারিণী' কবিতা। তার সার্থক রূপায়ণ 'নটীর

পূজা' নাট্যে। 'নটীর পূজা'র নাট্যিক আবেদন হয়তো কম, কিন্তু ধর্মের জগৎ আত্মত্যাগের মহিমায় তাকে প্রোক্ষল ক'রে তুলেছেন কবি। ধর্মকে জীবনের সঙ্গে একাত্ম করার সাধনা 'নটীর পূজা'র বড়ো কথা। রবীন্দ্রনাথের মনে বৌদ্ধধর্মের দার্শনিক তত্ত্ব অপেক্ষা প্রেম, মৈত্রী এবং অহিংসা বেশী প্রভাব বিস্তার করেছিল। দিব্যাবদান, অবদানশতক, অবদান-কল্ললতা প্রভৃতির বিভিন্ন কাহিনীকে রবীন্দ্রনাথ তাঁর 'কথা' কাব্যে প্রেম-মৈত্রী-ভাবনার দ্বারা রূপান্তরিত করেছেন। কারণ এ-ভাবনার সঙ্গে কবির নিজের মনোভাবনার গভীর এবং অন্তরঙ্গ যোগ ছিল।

রবীন্দ্রনাথ তাঁর কোনো-কোনো কবিতায় পুরোনো কাহিনীর রূপক অবলম্বন ক'রে নতুন কাব্য-ভাবনায় সম্বদ্ধিত করেছেন। দৃষ্টান্তস্বরূপ 'সৃষ্টি-স্থিতি-প্রলয়', 'অহল্যার প্রতি', 'উর্বশী', 'দুই পাখি', 'মদনভস্মের পূর্বে' ও 'মদনভস্মের পরে' প্রভৃতি কবিতার উল্লেখ করা যায়।

'সৃষ্টি-স্থিতি-প্রলয়ে' ব্রহ্মা-বিষ্ণু-মহেশ্বরের কল্লনায় ধ্বংস-দেবতা মহেশ্বরের নিকট জগতের প্রার্থনা :

আমারে নতুন দেহ দাও ।

গাও দেব, মরণসংগীত

পাষ মোরা নূতন জীবন ।

নিত্য-নূতনে অভিসারী রবীন্দ্রমানসের পরিচয়বাহী। 'অহল্যার প্রতি' কবিতায় বহুঙ্করার সঙ্গে আমাদের জীবনের যে-একাত্ম্যভাব—যা রবীন্দ্রনাথের 'ছিন্নপত্র' এবং 'সোনার তরী'র কবিতায় পূর্ণভাবে প্রকাশিত—তাই আভাসিত হয়েছে। স্বর্গ-অপ্সরা উর্বশীর রূপ বর্ণনা বৈদিক যুগ থেকে নানা কবি নানা ভাবে করেছেন। রবীন্দ্রনাথ দেহহীন সৌন্দর্যের—যাকে abstract কিংবা intellectual beauty বলা চলে—সেই ভাবনার দ্বারা 'উর্বশী' কবিতা রচনা করেছেন। ● পাশ্চাত্য সৌন্দর্যতত্ত্বের ধারণা হয়তো এ-ভাবনায় ক্রিয়াশীল ছিল। বেদ-উপনিষদের প্রসিদ্ধ দার্শনিক কবিতা ছাড়া স্পর্শা সমুজ্জা ইত্যাদি 'দুই পাখি'তে নব কলেবর ধারণ করেছে। 'মদনভস্মের পূর্বে' ও 'মদনভস্মের পরে'—এই দুই কবিতায় প্রেমের অব্যাপ্তি ও ব্যাপ্তির তত্ত্ব প্রকাশিত হয়েছে।

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BUDDHADEVA BOSE's latest publication is *Sañga : Nih̃saṅgatā : Rabindranath*, a collection of literary essays. The present paper is appearing simultaneously in JJCL and the *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*.

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